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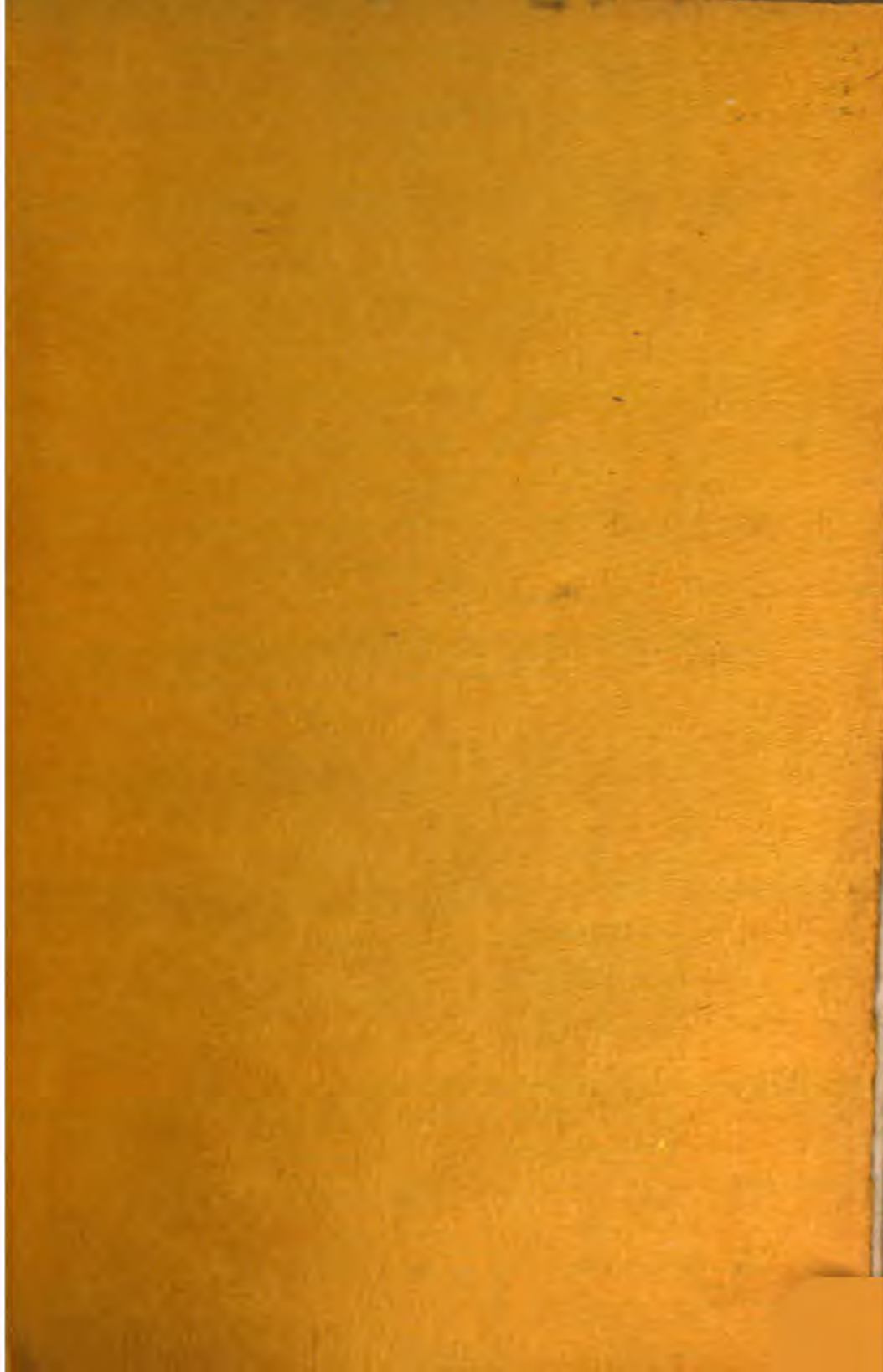
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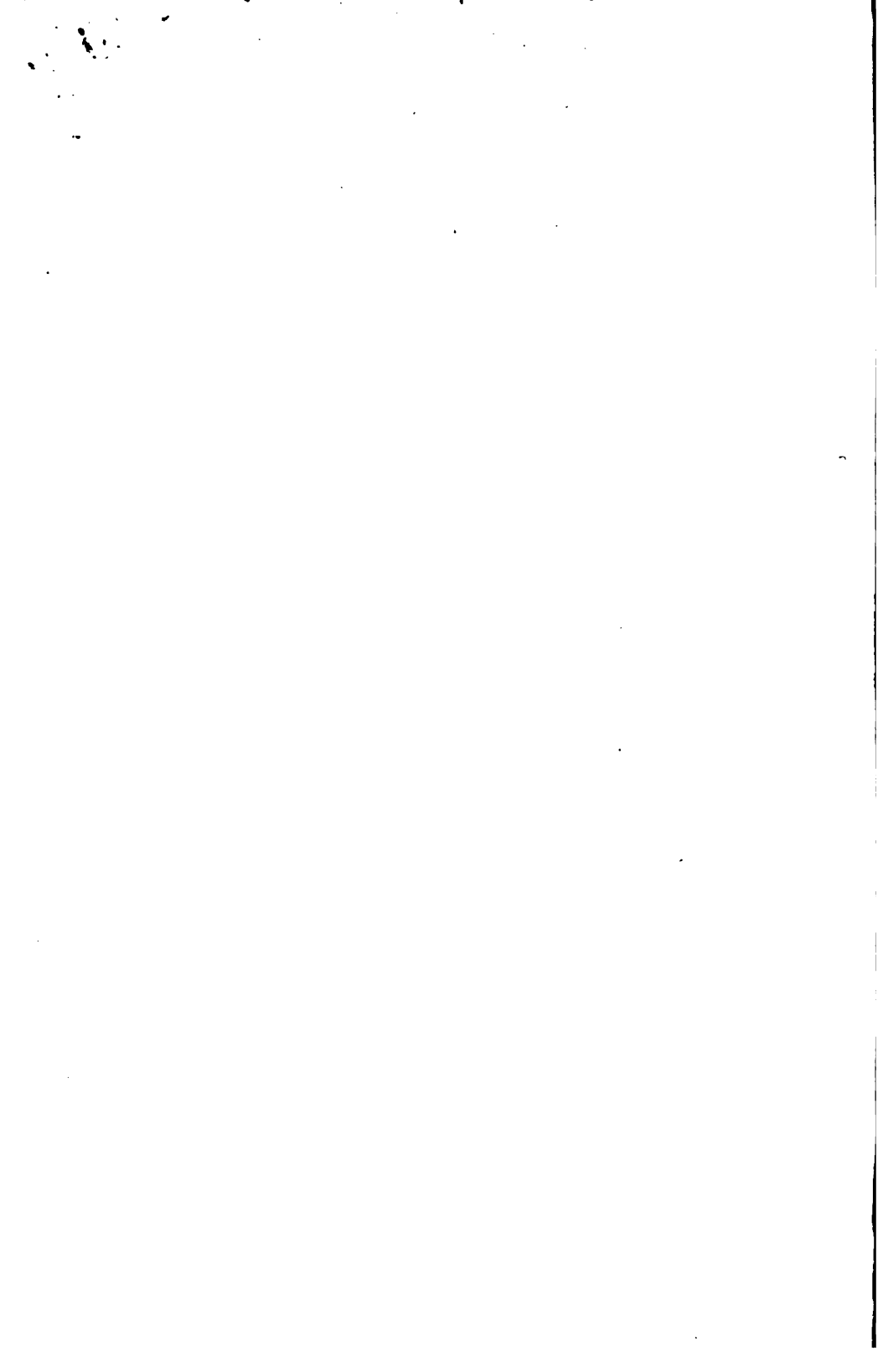
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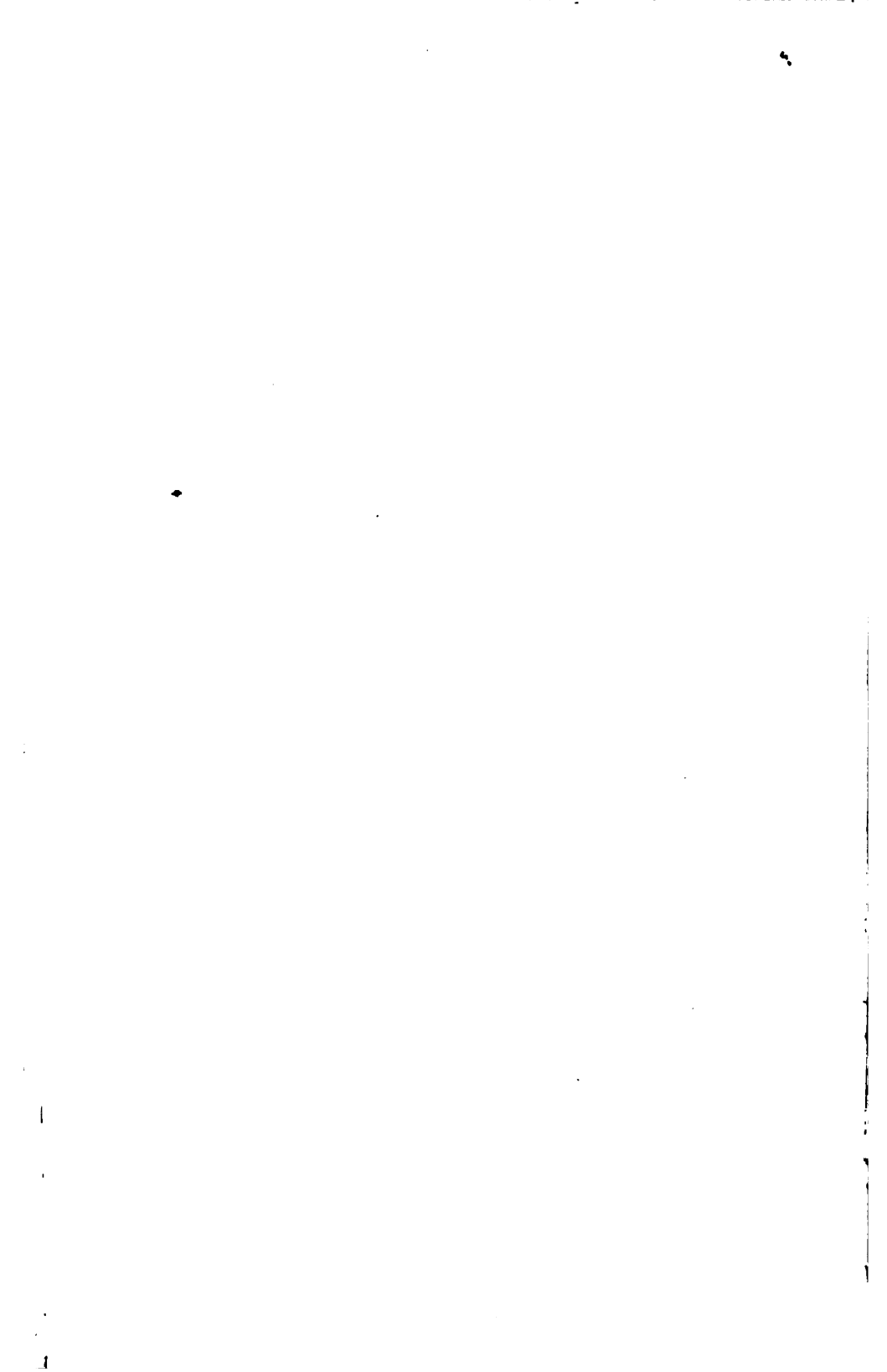




LOTUS LAND









THE ROYAL THAI FISHING BOAT

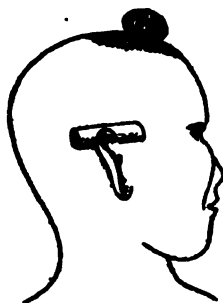
Lotus Land

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE COUNTRY
AND THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SIAM

BY
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PREFACE

No tales of adventure will be found in the following pages, nor have I anything to say concerning the rulers of Siam, but I have tried to give a faithful account of the peasantry, amongst whom I lived for three years.

Those who are acquainted with the literature of Siam will find much here that has been said before, yet to the great majority of English readers Siam is still an almost unknown land, and to have left out all these portions would have been to present a very incomplete picture. I trust that the book contains sufficient that is new to justify the retelling of that which is old.

The greater part of the introduction consists of a historical sketch of Siam. In the present state of our knowledge much remains pure conjecture, and those who refer to the works of my authorities will find that they are full of conflicting statements. It is with the hope that more of the Europeans now resident in Siam may become interested in this field of research, and help to clear up the many points now in doubt, that I have given this summary in an easily accessible form.

The frontispiece is from a sketch by Nai Chan, a Siamese artist. The photograph of elephants in the *paniet*, facing p. 228, was taken by a Bangkok photographer. All the remaining illustrations are from my own photographs and sketches. The

photographs were taken with a quarter-plate camera, fitted with a Zeiss lens and Goertz sector shutter. I always used glass plates. My thanks are due to the Art Reproduction Company for the great care which they took in making the reproductions.

The design upon the cover was taken from the edge of a column at Nakawn Wat.

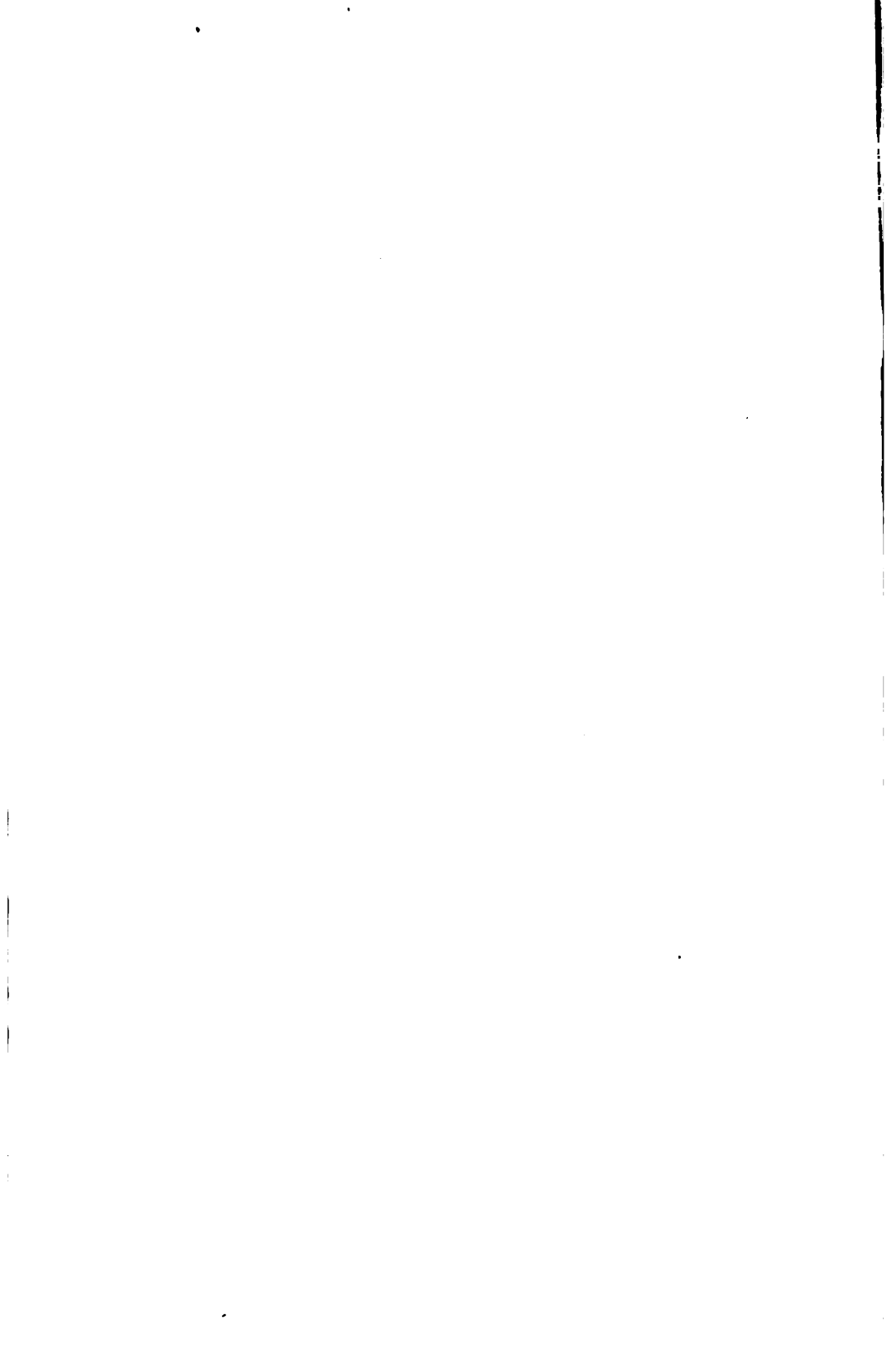
I wish especially to express my indebtedness to Colonel Gerini, not only for his published writings, of which I have made free use, but also for much information given to me in the course of conversation. The Siamese proverbs, and the maxims of Pra Ruang, which will be found at the heads of many of the chapters, were selected from those collected by Colonel Gerini, and published in the first volume of the Journal of the Siam Society, 1905. I also owe a great deal to my friends of the Royal Siamese Survey Department, and particularly to Mr. A. J. Irwin, for many valuable suggestions. Dr. A. C. Haddon, fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, most kindly placed at my disposal some notes on the very complex ethnology of Indo-China. From my uncle, Mr. E. S. Thompson, fellow of the same college, I also received much help.

P. A. T.

July 1906.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	I
I. BANGKOK	31
II. PRESENT CONDITIONS	51
III. THE BUDDHIST RELIGION	77
IV. TEMPLES, IMAGES AND SYMBOLS	90
V. THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE YELLOW ROBE	115
VI. THE PEES AND CHARMS	136
VII. SIAMESE ART	146
VIII. RICE AND FISH	165
IX. CAMP LIFE	190
X. AYUTHIA AND THE ELEPHANT HUNT	212
XI. LOPBURI, AND THE STORY OF PHAULCON	233
XII. THE PRABAT MOUNTAIN	245
XIII. THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE	256
XIV. THE FRAGMENTS OF AN EMPIRE	270
XV. ANGKOR TOM	283
NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS	303
INDEX	308



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Royal Procession Barge	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 29
Houses and Attap Palms	<i>to face page</i> 32
A Bangkok Temple, Wat Conlaya Nemit	„ 36
A Siamese Coolie "Chao-ing"	„ 38
A Klong	„ 40
An Inveterate Smoker	<i>page</i> 41
The Market	<i>to face page</i> 44
A Bangkok Garden	„ 48
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 50
A Siamese Farmer and Wife	<i>to face page</i> 56
Siamese Girls	„ 60
A Coolie	„ 64
A Monk	„ 68
Children	„ 72
A Farmer and Children	„ 72
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 76
The Great Renunciation, from a fresco in the Bawt, Wat Chang, Bangkok	<i>to face page</i> 84
Tailpiece, Bronze Head of Buddha	<i>page</i> 89
The Bawt, Wat Sutat, Bangkok	<i>to face page</i> 92
Bronze Images, from the Author's Collection	„ 96
Singto, a Lion	„ 98
A Chakkra	„ 98
Images of Disciples	„ 100
The Great Pra Prang, Wat Chang, Bangkok	„ 104
The Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Wat Pra Keo, Bangkok	„ 108
A Pra Prang, Wat Pichaiyat, Bangkok	„ 112
A Pra Chedi, Wat Pichaiyat, Bangkok	„ 112

Tailpiece, Bronze Figures, from the Author's Collection	<i>page</i> 114
The Village Monastery, on the morning of a Festival	<i>to face page</i> 122
A Bell Tower	" 128
The Steps of Pu Kao T'hong	" 128
Three Little Maids	" 132
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 135
The Entrance to Wat Chang, Bangkok	<i>to face page</i> 138
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 145
The Door of the Wihan, Wat Sutat, Bangkok	<i>to face page</i> 148
China, from the Author's Collection, one-fifth full size	" 150
Bronze Buddhas, Katamat Pet, from Wat Pichaiyat, Bangkok	" 152
Stone Image of Buddha, from Pra Prang Sam Yot, Lopburi	" 152
Spears, Swords and Fiddles, from the Author's Collection, one-fourteenth full size	" 156
Siamese Niello Ware, from the Author's Collection, one-fifth full size	" 158
Black Lacquer Panel, with inlaid Mother-of-Pearl, from Wat Rajobopitr, Bangkok	" 162
Black Lacquer Panel, with Gilded Figures, from Wat Sutat, Bangkok	" 162
Lacquer Panel, the Girl-fruit Tree, from Wat Chang, Bangkok	" 162
Tailpiece, a Taypanom	<i>page</i> 164
A Sala	<i>to face page</i> 168
A Klong with Bamboos	" 172
The Beginning of the Rains	" 176
Ploughing with Buffaloes	" 180
A Buffalo Cart	" 180
A Plank Path through the Bamboos	" 184
Surveying Garden Land	" 184
A Siamese Fisherman	<i>page</i> 186

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xi

A Siamese Fisherman	<i>page</i> 187
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat .	„ 189
Travelling by River	<i>to face page</i> 198
Travelling with Buffalo Cart and Sledges .	„ 206
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat .	<i>page</i> 211
The Great Bronze Buddha, Pra Si Sam Pet, Wat Somorakôt, Ayuthia	<i>to face page</i> 216
Pra Chern, Ayuthia	„ 218
Wild Elephants in the Grass Jungle, near Pachin	„ 222
The Wild Herd pouring over the River Bank .	„ 224
The Wild Herd crossing the River	„ 226
Catching Elephants in the Paniet	„ 228
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 232
An Ancient Triple Sanctuary, Pra Prang Sam Yot, Lopburi	<i>to face page</i> 236
Wat Na Pra Tat, Lopburi	„ 240
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 244
The Shrine, Pra Puttha Bat	<i>to face page</i> 248
The Prabat Hills	„ 252
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 255
At the Door of a Temple	<i>to face page</i> 262
Cocoanut Palms	„ 262
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 269
The Prapratom Pagoda	<i>to face page</i> 272
The Klong and Market, Prapratom	„ 274
The Great Seated Buddha, Pra Reh Rai, Supan	„ 278
Tailpiece, from the Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	<i>page</i> 282
The Nakawn Wat	<i>to face page</i> 284
The Great Staircase, Nakawn Wat	„ 286
A Tower, Nakawn Wat	„ 286
An Angle of a Court, Nakawn Wat	„ 288
A Window, Nakawn Wat	„ 290
A Door-post, Nakawn Wat	„ 290
From the Gallery of Bas-reliefs, Nakawn Wat	„ 292
Carvings from the Nakawn Wat	„ 294

A Colonnade, Nakawn Wat . . .	<i>to face page</i> 296
The Central Tower, Nakawn Wat . .	„ 298
A Doorway, Baion	„ 298
Baion	„ 300
Plan of a Cambodian Temple . .	<i>page</i> 12
Map	<i>at end</i>



INTRODUCTION

“ Being a Freeman do not associate with slaves.”

Maxim of PRA RUANG.

If we turn to the map of Siam we shall see represented a country larger than Spain and Portugal combined, lying between the fourth and twenty-first parallels North latitude, and, therefore, wholly within the tropics. On the north it is separated from China by the mountainous Lao country, which has been partitioned amongst Siam, the British Shan States, and French Tong - King. The north - eastern boundary, between Siamese and French territory, is formed by the Mekong, which, rising in the unknown lands behind the Hindu Kush, finds its way after more than two thousand miles into the China Sea. To the south-east, and on the right bank of the Mekong, is the French protectorate of Cambodia. On the west a chain of mountains marks the line of a great granitic upheaval which divides Burmah from Siam, and, extending southward, forms the backbone of the Malay Peninsula.

The northern part of Siam is a mountain-land covered with dense forest, through which one may journey for days without seeing a human habitation ;

while off the beaten tracks rhinoceros, leopard, tiger, deer, and other kinds of big game abound. Here the average altitude of the country is about one thousand feet above sea-level, and some hills rise to a height of over six thousand feet.¹ The highlands, above the level of three thousand feet, are sparsely inhabited by nomad peoples, who dwell in wretched villages, and plant a variety of rice in clearings on the hillsides. Beginning at the foot of a slope they half cut through the trunks of the trees, and thus work upward. Then the topmost trees are felled, and bear down in their fall the weakened trunks below. So, as in the track of an avalanche, destruction sweeps through the forest. The fallen trees and undergrowth are afterwards burnt, and the clearing thus made is at first very productive, but when the wood ashes have been washed away by the rains it will only support a scanty crop. Game becomes scarce, the other resources of the neighbourhood are soon exhausted, and in a few years the villagers must move elsewhere. In the deserted clearings worthless jungle covers the place once occupied by valuable timber, and by this reckless destruction of forest the rainfall over a large district has been seriously diminished. Thus hardly may the hill-men win a living from this inhospitable region.

Yet the mountain valleys are of great fertility, and here another race of men, the Laos, live in comparative ease. In addition to rice they cultivate tobacco and a little cotton, whilst tea grows

¹ Note on "Upper Siam" by the Director of the Inland Revenue Department, published in *The Kingdom of Siam* on the occasion of the St. Louis Exhibition, 1904, p. 30.

wild on the slopes of the hills. It is not used as a beverage, but the practice of chewing fermented tea-leaves is almost universal amongst the inhabitants of upper Siam. The Laos are skilful boat builders, and the bulk of their trade is with Bangkok by river. A small proportion is carried over rough trails by caravans of pack mules, ponies, bullocks, and native bearers who bring silk, brass-ware, and piece-goods from Burmah, in exchange for the native-made dresses (*panungs*) and jungle produce: sticklac, horns, and hides.

To Europeans the district owes its importance to the teak trees scattered through the forests. Chieng-Mai, the capital of the north, is the centre of a great teak trade. In the hilly districts elephants are very largely employed in moving the logs to the watercourses, down which they float to the river, but in the wide, flat valley of the Menam Po the logs are often drawn on buffalo carts. In the neighbourhood of the watershed on the Burmese frontier it is often easier to send the logs down the Salween than to get them to the Menam Ping, and no inconsiderable portion of the timber shipped from Moulmein was grown in Siam.

South of Raheng the country gradually changes its character, and at Paknam Po, where the Menam Ping and the Menam Po join to form the Menam Chao P'hya, we get down into the great alluvial plain which stretches to the sea. The Menam Chao P'hya, the chief river of Siam, will henceforth be spoken of simply as the Menam, "The Mother of Waters," though in Siamese this name is applied to any river. Thirty miles south of the junction at Paknam Po the united river divides again, and for the re-

maining one hundred and twenty miles it flows in two roughly parallel branches, whose mouths are twenty miles apart. The eastern branch is the main river, on which Bangkok stands. The river system of southern Siam is completed by the Meklong, which drains the western frontier, and by the short Bangpakong river, which receives a considerable volume of water from the highlands that bound the plain on the east.

At no very distant geological epoch the Gulf of Siam extended far beyond its present limits, and the whole plain has been deposited by the great rivers which come down heavily charged with the detritus of the hills. At Bangkok sea-shells are found twenty feet beneath the surface. The slope of the land is there so gradual that the rivers are tidal for more than sixty miles from the sea.¹ It has been calculated that the land is making at the head of the gulf at a rate of thirteen feet a year. In the time of King Narai, whose reign ended in 1688 A.D., the tide is said to have come up as far as the town of Lopburi, which would indicate a still faster rate of advance.

Every year during the rainy season the plain is inundated, in some parts to a depth of six feet. As usual in an alluvial country, the ground falls gently away from the river banks, and the rivers run on imperceptible embankments, formed of their own silt. A narrow strip along the bank is fairly dry even in the wettest months, whilst in the in-

¹ The average slope of the land is about one to nine thousand, but the slope gradually decreases, and is much less near the coast. The difference between ebb and flood level is from ten to fourteen feet in the gulf. Note on "Lower Siam" by the Director of the Irrigation Department. *Op. cit.* p. 36 *et seq.*

intermediate districts there are great marshes which do not dry up until the hot season is far advanced. The banks of the rivers are fringed with trees and bamboos, which grow there not for the sake of moisture, but to keep out of the water during the floods. Naturally too the villages cluster along the river banks.

The delta was originally covered with long grass and brushwood, and vast tracts still remain, where herds of wild elephants roam about, but the jungle is being slowly replaced by cultivation, for this is some of the richest rice-growing land in the world. The whole of this part of the country is intersected by a network of small rivers and artificial canals, and almost all communication is by water. In the rainy season steam launches can go up as far as Utaradit, on the Menam Po. The Menam Ping is never navigable for steam launches, and the journey to Chieng-Mai must be made in an up-country boat, with half-a-dozen natives to pole or tow it up the rapids. At the most favourable season the time spent in getting from Bangkok to Chieng-Mai falls little short of that required to travel from London to Bangkok. In the northern provinces, and on the highlands which surround the delta, pack bullocks are the chief means of transport on long journeys that cannot be made by river. Bullock carts are largely employed in the villages around the edge of the delta, but in the central districts, which are deeply flooded every year, the carts are almost invariably drawn by water-buffaloes.

East of the Menam is the rice-growing plateau of Korat, bounded on the south by the chain of

the Dongrek. Between this and the sea, highlands and forest separate the basin of the Menam from the equally rich plains of Cambodia.

Ethnologists tell us that the cradle-land of the human race was a tropical continent, of which Java, Borneo, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula formed parts, and from whence man dispersed over the globe in Pleistocene times.¹ It is therefore probable that Siam was one of the very earliest countries to be inhabited. In upper Burmah palæolithic flints have been discovered,² but in Siam the first inhabitants of whom traces have yet been found were neolithic men. Many implements of polished stone were discovered by M. Massie in the neighbourhood of Luang Prabang; and at Korat, during the construction of the railway, an adze of flint and a chisel-shaped tool of some green stone were found.³ These stone implements are identical in character with those from other parts of the world, and the depth at which they were found indicates a very high antiquity. From the form of the stone axes it seems probable that even in that remote period the inhabitants dug out canoes.⁴ These polished stones, whose origin has ages since been forgotten, are called "thunder-stones" by the natives, and amongst the Shans, as in ancient Greece, they are worn as charms.⁵

In Indo-China, as elsewhere, the Stone Age was succeeded by the Age of Bronze. M. Massie has

¹ Keane, *Man: Past and Present*, chap. i.

² By Dr. Noetling in 1894. *Ibid.* p. 5.

³ By Mr. H. Gittins of the Royal Siamese Railway Department, who thus described them to me.

⁴ Mission Pavie, *Exploration de l'Indo-Chine*, vol. i. Note by M. Massie.

⁵ Keane, *op. cit.* p. 172.

found ancient bronze implements in the hands of natives at Luang Prabang.

In the lowlands of Indo-China the original stock at an early date formed settled communities, which have now been almost completely absorbed by successive waves of invaders. In the wilder districts the descendants of the autochthonous inhabitants may be found to-day, but little further advanced in the scale of civilisation than their forefathers of the Stone Age. Such are the Semangs and Sakai of the Malay Peninsula—naked savages, who use blow-pipes and poisoned darts. They are also represented by the Kuis of Cambodia, by the widely scattered race of the Karens, and by the Lawas, Rongs, and the Khas of the Lao country.¹ It is interesting to compare the pottery and many objects still made by some of these semi-savage peoples with the grave goods and stone ornaments found in ancient kitchen middens.²

Ethnologically they represent very diverse types; Negritic in the Semangs and Sakai, and Caucasian amongst the Kuis, Karens, and Khas—showing that at some very distant epoch there must have been widespread movements amongst the great divisions of mankind. In the Mans of Tong-King the Caucasian element is very strong, and these people say that they came “from a far-off Western land, where their forefathers were said to have lived in contact with peoples of white blood thousands of years ago.”³

¹ *Lawas, Rong, and Kha* simply mean “wild” or “barbarous,” and they must not be taken as the real tribal names, but only as names which have been applied to these peoples by their more civilised neighbours.

² Mission Pavie, *op. cit.* Note by M. Ludovic Jammes, who speaks particularly of the kitchen middens of the “Somronsén Epoch”—a term which I have been unable to identify.

³ Keane, *op. cit.* p. 205.

The earliest invaders of Indo-China seem to have been a Mongolian race who came originally from the great central plateaus of Asia, and to whom the name of "Proto-Malays" may be given. They were driven by later invaders from the lowlands of Indo-China to the islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and there, mingling with the autochthonous inhabitants, gave rise to the various Malay groups. From the islands they recrossed to the Malay Peninsula in the twelfth century A.D.

The first great kingdom to arise in Indo-China was that of the Champas, which embraced southern Tong-King, Annam, and part of central Siam. I am now speaking of a time six hundred years before the Christian era, and, according to the legends preserved by the natives, the great lake, Talé Sap, was then joined to the sea, forming a gulf which penetrated far into the interior. This gulf, into which the Mekong flowed, two hundred miles from its present mouth, formed the outlet of the Champa kingdom. From the interior came ivory and precious stones, rare spices, lac, and valuable woods. It was the "Golden Chersonese" of the old Western writers. At this time India already enjoyed a high civilisation. Her merchants sent navies far across the seas; her sailors were skilful and hardy navigators, not creeping round within sight of land, but boldly sailing across the Bay of Bengal, and rounding the Malay Peninsula, in search of that fabled land which lay beyond.

Thus, first attracted by love of gain, and later perhaps by missionary zeal, numerous groups of Indians settled on the banks of the Mekong. For centuries the work of colonisation and civilisation

went on, until, in the third century before Christ, the Land of Gold was morally, though not politically, a dependency of India, and Brahminism had to a great extent replaced that snake-worship which was the original religion of the country.¹ In a lesser degree other ancient navigators established relations with the dwellers on the Mekong, and Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Chinese all left their mark upon the primitive inhabitants. In those days there was a caravan route from the Red Sea to the Nile, which thus formed the great channel of communication between East and West, and it is possible that even the Romans visited these distant shores in the first centuries of our era. At all events nothing is more remarkable in the old Cambodian legends than the frequent mention of white men and a prince of "Rome."²

The Proto-Malays, who formed the most important element in the races of southern Annam and Cambodia, were profoundly modified by intermarriage with the Hindu immigrants. Moreover, the Proto-Malays were themselves fused upon a still earlier Caucasian stock—the Kuis, or "Original Khmers" as the Cambodians call them. Thus in the delta of the Mekong a new people arose, who were of Caucasian rather than Mongolian descent, and as they grew into a powerful nation they absorbed the Champa kingdom.

¹ Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, vol. iii. p. 348 *et seq.*

² The legends referred to are those collected by Dr. Adolph Bastian, and more especially by Colonel Low, from Siamese books. Fergusson, *History of Architecture*, vol. ii. p. 724 (1865). Mr. Warrington Smyth gives many interesting points of resemblance between the modern craft of the rivers and Gulf of Siam and those ships of the early Mediterranean navigators with which Egyptian sculptures and classical writers have made us familiar. *Five Years in Siam*, appendix xviii.

Henceforth I shall speak of them as the Khmers, or Cambodians. M. Aymonier believes the latter name to have been derived from Kambu, who, like another Manu, was the lawgiver and the mythological ancestor of the Indians established on the Mekong.¹ Thus Kambujas, "Sons of Kambu," became the title of the noble caste, and was extended by official use to the whole people. The most ancient document of Indo-China yet discovered belongs to the third century A.D., and it is written in pure classic Sanscrit. The later inscriptions are in a character resembling the Kawi of the Javanese, and they have only recently been deciphered by the labours of M. Aymonier and the members of M. Pavie's mission.

The earliest monuments of this people are found in the southern part of the alluvial plain. On the banks of the Prek T'hnot, and in the province of Bati, the numerous architectural remains are evidence of a former dense population.² According to M. Aymonier the inscriptions dug up in these edifices date from the sixth century A.D., but the buildings were raised on the sites and constructed out of the materials of more ancient temples. For the most part they consist of sanctuaries, which occur either singly or in groups of three or five. They are generally built of brick, raised on a mound of earth or a platform of laterite, but sometimes they are built entirely of laterite.³ A small

¹ Aymonier, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 401. Manu was the lawgiver of the Brahmins. He corresponded to the Menes of the Egyptians or to King Minos of Crete.

² Throughout the following description of these ancient temples I am indebted to the *Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments du Cambodge* par E. Lunet de Lajonquière. *Publications de L'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, 1901. Vol. iv. introduction.

³ A conglomerated schist and iron ore.

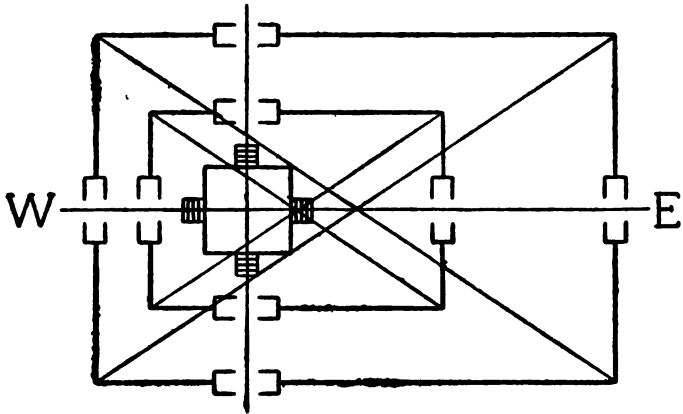
cubical chamber, whose side measures from six to ten feet, is surmounted by a pyramidal structure, the entrance almost invariably towards the east, and often approached through a porch. Sometimes the porch connects the sanctuary with a much larger rectangular edifice or nave, with gabled roof supported by four rows of square pillars. The interior is lit by windows in the side walls, and the nave is entered by three doors in its eastern face, sheltered by a portico. These naves are often of later date than the sanctuaries to which they are attached; they do not occur in the most ancient temples, and their appearance coincides with the development of Buddhism. They are, in fact, the prototypes of the modern Buddhist temples found throughout Siam. A slightly different form of religious edifice is the *prang*, which consists of a high pyramid formed by terraced stages and supporting a little sanctuary, reached by a staircase on each of the four faces.¹ This form is also common to-day in Siam, though the sanctuary is replaced by a relic chamber, generally completely walled in, and surmounted by a pointed column.

The provinces of Lovéa Em and Kien Svay contain no archæological vestiges, probably because at the architectural epoch of the Cambodians they were of very recent formation and unsuited to be the sites of durable edifices. They were, indeed, at that time no more than vast swamps, in which stood some islands of higher ground, such as Pnom Penh. But it is north of the lakes, beyond the region of the annual inundation, that we find in the Nakawn Wat and at Angkor Tom those

¹ The ancient Babylonian temples were built in this way.

architectural remains which place the Cambodians amongst the great building races of the world.¹

The later Cambodian temples were elaborations of the early brick sanctuaries. The sanctuary was surrounded by one or more rectangular enclosures, which, in their simplest form, consisted of a wall of laterite eight or nine feet in height. The point of intersection of the major and minor axes of the



PLAN OF A CAMBODIAN TEMPLE

enclosure immediately surrounding the sanctuary did not correspond with the point of intersection of the axes of the sanctuary itself, but was displaced in the direction of its major axis towards the east. Nor was the outer enclosure symmetrically built about the inner, but it was similarly displaced still farther to the east. Small buildings, used as relic chambers or libraries, were built in the eastern part of the enclosures, in pairs symmetrically placed about the major axis of the temple. The temple

¹ Nakawn and Angkor are corruptions of the Indian *Nagara*. *Tom* means simply "The Great City."

was entered through a structure called a *gopura*, which broke the continuity of the enclosing wall. Originally these *gopuras* were square halls. Later they took a rectangular shape, so that as one passed through the gateway a deep recess was seen on either side. Sometimes they were cruciform, and surmounted by a pyramidal tower. The approach to the temple was marked by two lines of stones, and in the great temples these stone avenues were continued through the enclosures themselves, forming a system of axial galleries. The main entrance to the temple was almost always towards the east; but in the greatest of all, the Nakawn Wat, it is on the west, and the displacement of the enclosures is towards the west instead of towards the east.

In the days of Angkor Tom's greatness paved causeways were constructed between the city and the river Mekong, and from that river a road ran for more than three hundred miles in a northeasterly direction to Korat. Small rivers were bridged over by huge slabs of laterite supported upon massive piers, and solid retaining walls were built to keep the stream within its banks. Some of these bridges still remain, and in the heart of the jungle the traveller may still come upon traces of the old roads, half buried beneath the forest.

From the inscriptions M. Aymonier concludes that it was towards the eighth century A.D. that the Khmer kings moved their residence to the north of the lakes, and that the most splendid period of their empire began. Such a removal from a fertile land to a region covered with endless forest is, however, opposed to the whole tendency of the progress of nations in Indo-China, and we

can only believe that it was caused through the stress of some great political upheaval or religious movement. Thus M. Pallegoix suggests that these buildings were the outcome or, as it were, the visible expression of the religious revival which must have taken place when Buddhism was introduced from Ceylon in the tenth century. Against this must be placed the unmistakably Brahminical character of the oldest temples at Angkor.

It is more probable that the impulse came from some new invasion. Tradition tells of a king who came from the North, and who founded a city on the shores of the Great Lake. Fergusson connects this legend with the troubles which took place in Cashmere at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and it is probable that about that time a great migration took place from western India. In support of this he shows that although the *gopuras* and spires of the Nakawn Wat recall the Dravidian types of southern India, yet it has much also in common with the temples of Cashmere. Moreover, in ancient times, the country around Taxila was called Camboja.¹ A further connection with northern India is to be found in the inscriptions. In the time of the earliest kings of Angkor they were written in a double character: one the ancient Cambodian, or Khmer, originating in southern India, and the other apparently coming from northern India.²

In the legends, which will be found in the last

¹ Fergusson, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 714. Taxila is the modern Shah Dheri.

² These inscriptions belong to the time of Yasovarman, 889-909, in whose reign M. Aymeries believes that the building of Angkor Tom was completed. *Le Cambodge*, vol. iii. p. 479.

chapter, the invaders are said to have come from the old Lao capital, Indapat-Buri.¹ This name seems to have been applied to Angkor Tom, and before it to the older kingly residence in the Kulen hills near by. It is a corruption of *Indra-prastha*, the old Delhi of the Mahabharata, and so far it confirms the theory that the builders came from north-west India. The name, however, nowhere occurs in the inscriptions, and Colonel Gerini believes that it was applied in comparatively modern times, at the suggestion of later Hindu immigrants, who saw in the grandeur of the Cambodian capital a revival of their own past glorious history.

To me the theory that the kings of Angkor were indeed Laos, as the legends say, seems worthy of attention. In the modern Cambodians the Caucasian strain has been almost entirely eliminated, and I am tempted to think that at some very early date the Cambodians received a notable infusion of the blood of the common ancestors of Siamese and Laos.

I should suppose that the shock of that upheaval in Cashmere was communicated across the continent, and set in motion the Lao tribes, who, as we shall presently see, had recently settled in the upper part of the Menam Valley. Crossing the Korat plateau they swooped upon the highly civilised, Hinduised inhabitants of the plains, and became their masters. The site of their royal residence was well chosen on the Great Lake, which was their first outlet to the sea. In time emigrants from northern India followed in the track of conquest, keeping mainly to great trade routes, but leaving everywhere traces

¹ The suffix *Buri* is equivalent to *Tom*, meaning "city."

of their art. And out of the mingling of the two streams of civilisation from northern and southern India grew an architecture finer than either had produced alone, which, while it kept something of the style of each, added also something that was indigenous to the soil on which they met.

In the Mongolian character of the faces of the deified females, which are constantly repeated at the Nakawn Wat, we see at least a probability that the ruling race was of Mongolian and not Caucasian descent.¹ But, whoever ruled in Angkor, I cannot agree with those who think that the bulk of the inhabitants were serfs, employed upon these great works by their alien masters. Indeed, as Thomson says, "There is a thoroughness about their edifices and a genuine love of art evinced in all their sculptures: in the tender tracery lavished without stint upon the stones, in the uniform grace of every curving stem, in each delicately chiselled lotus or lily, such as never could have come out of the lash of the slave, out of ill-requited, unwilling hands, or out of the crushed spirit of a bondsman."²

Rather may we not suppose that the construction of Angkor Tom was the natural result of a high civilisation which received a new impetus from the warlike and conquering Northerners? In any case, from about the middle of the seventh to that of the thirteenth century, the kingdom of the Khmers was all-powerful in Indo-China, embracing modern Cambodia and Siam as far north as the eighteenth degree.³

¹ Fergusson, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 724, and see illustration facing p. 290.

² Thomson, *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China*, p. 132.

³ Monograph on "Siamese Archaeology," by Colonel Gerini, published in *The Kingdom of Siam*, p. 223.

The inhabitants of the Menam valley were closely allied to the Khmers by race, forming a link between them and the Mons and Peguans of the delta of the Irrawadi.¹ Many secondary states divided the basin of the Menam, but all were under the suzerainty of the predominant Cambodian power, and they were, therefore, imbued with Cambodian civilisation. They received besides, from an early date, direct influence from India, whose traders were established throughout the length of the west coast of the Malay Peninsula, whence they crossed overland to the Gulf of Siam.² At the dawn of the Christian era Buddhism had already reached the head of the gulf, and soon spread over all the delta of the Menam.³ The oldest monuments found here are Buddhist in character: brick spires or *pra prangs*, standing on a basement of laterite. There are besides, scattered throughout southern and central Siam, examples of those sanctuaries surmounted by blunt spires of a Dravidian type, which I have already described as typical of the Cambodians.⁴ At Ratburi and Supan they are found, and at Ayuthia and Lopburi and Sukot'hai, while at Pimai, a day's journey to the north of Korat, the remains are scarcely inferior to those at Angkor itself. As in Cambodia, these sanctuaries are almost always associated with later developments of a purely Buddhist character. How far the spread of Buddhism led to these additions by the Cambodians themselves it is difficult to say, but the greater number were probably due to the Siamese. To them at least must be ascribed the form of spire

¹ Aymonier, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 669.

² Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 214.

³ *Ibid.* p. 214.

⁴ p. 10.

known as *pra chedi*. Even the sanctuary itself may not always have been built by the Cambodians, for in later times the old forms were copied by the Siamese. The use of laterite in large blocks may, however, generally be taken as an indication that the building really dates from the epoch of the Cambodian domination.

The first important capital in the Menam delta was the city of Sri Vijaya, on the site of modern Prapatom.¹ Here were dug up the earliest epigraphic records yet discovered in the country of the delta—terra-cotta tablets containing the Buddhist profession of faith in Pali. The character in which they are written is of a type belonging to southern India, and it indicates that they date from the sixth or seventh century A.D.² The main outlet of the river was then its western branch, now known as the Tachin river, and at that time this branch flowed through the city some ten miles west of its present course. In the chain of lakes and marshes, still called by the natives the Menam Kao—"Old River"—we can clearly trace in many places the former bed of the river.

In time Sri Vijaya was left far from the river bank, and the capital was moved to Suvarnabhumi, about eight miles west of the modern village of Supan. When, in its changing course, the main river flowed through the eastern channel the capital was removed to Lopburi. A Khmer inscription has been found at Lopburi bearing two dates which correspond to A.D. 1022 and A.D. 1025.³ Still the river bed altered, and when Lopburi was left on

¹ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 215.

² *Ibid.* p. 223.

³ *Ibid.* p. 223.

an unimportant and shallow creek the capital was moved down to Dvaravadi, which was soon to be the Ayuthia of the Siamese.

A second stream of Indian traders flowed into Siam through Pegu, and brought with them a more purely Brahminical influence. The oldest structures in central and northern Siam date from before the Christian era. Colonel Gerini describes them as "gloomy shrines and hermit cells, erected mostly on the tops and flanks of the hills, and carefully oriented according to the cardinal points. They are characterised by massive cyclopean walls surmounted by gable roofs, all built of laterite blocks excavated near by, and laid throughout in horizontal courses without any cement; their unique entrance, which faces the east, curving towards the top into a pointed, often lancet-shaped, arch. The style quite resembles that of the ancient central and northern India temples, thus evidencing that their planning, and perhaps construction, was due at least in part to immigrants and settlers from those quarters."¹

Meanwhile, far to the north of Siam, the great Tai-Shan race dwelt in what are now the south-west provinces of China. The Tai-Shans are a Mongolian people who, in the dawn of their history, migrated from the Kiu-lung mountains in China proper, and by intermingling with the Caucasian aborigines (Kakhyens), south of the Yangtse Kiang, they acquired a finer physique than the surrounding Mongolian groups. As the Chinese advanced southward beyond the Yangtse Kiang they amalgamated with the Shans. But some of the Shan tribes, while too weak to stem the ad-

¹ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 216.

vancing tide of Chinese civilisation, would yet not consent to lose their nationality nor to sacrifice their proud title of *Tai*—the “Noble” or “Free.”¹ So they dispersed towards the south, and began that long march which was only to end when they reached the sea.

The Tai-Shans arrived in the Menam basin by stages, and their successive capitals show that the seat of empire moved steadily southward. It was, if we accept the evidence of tradition, the advanced guard of this slow-moving horde which was hurled by the course of events upon the inhabitants of the Cambodian plains ; but henceforth they were entirely cut off from the main body, and as kings of Angkor they waged incessant war upon the later comers. The history of the early capitals of the Tai-Shans in northern and central Siam is very obscure, and little help can be obtained from the Siamese *Annals of the North*, which, as the late King Mongkut said, are “full of fable.” In the north the Tai-Shans asserted independence at an early date, and Lampun remained their capital from the sixth century until 1281 A.D., when it was supplanted by Chieng-Mai.²

Meanwhile they held central Siam only as the vassals of the kings of Angkor, just as our Norman kings were independent monarchs of England, but owed allegiance to the king of France for Normandy.³ Nevertheless this tributary state soon rose to great importance, with its capital alternately at Sawankalok and Sukot'hai. These cities were

¹ The Siamese still call themselves by this name, which they aspirote, *T'hai*.

² Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 215.

³ Aymonier, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 691.



A BANGKOK GARDEN



ancient strongholds of Brahminism, but with the advent of the Tai-Shans Buddhism and Brahminism seem to have flourished simultaneously.

While the power of Cambodia was still at its height the Tai-Shans were pressing southward through the hilly country on the west of the Menam valley, and penetrating far into the Malay Peninsula. According to the Malay annals they had reached the Straits of Malacca before the Malays crossed from Sumatra and founded their first colony at Singapore, in 1160 A.D.

The Tai-Shans are lighter in colour than the other races of Indo-China, and though smaller in stature than the Chinese they are taller than the Malays. In the south the Tai-Shans mingled with the Malays and Cambodians, and their descendants are darker than those of their cousins, who remained behind in the highlands of the north. It will be convenient to speak henceforth of this southern branch of the Tai-Shan race as the Siamese, whilst the northern branch is divided into the Laos on the east, and the Shans on the west.

The early language of the Tai-Shans was polysyllabic, but by phonetic decay the sounds were reduced to monosyllables, and gradations of tone were employed to denote differences of meaning.¹ In Siamese there are five tones, and there are practically no grammatical inflections. Very many words in Siamese are derived directly from the Sanscrit, while others have passed through the intermediate stage of Pali.

The name Sayama (Sanskrit *Syama*, "brown-coloured") first appears in an inscription dated

¹ Keane, *op. cit.* p. 202.

1050 A.D., and again in a Khmer inscription of the twelfth century at the Nakawn Wat.¹ Our form, Siam, was brought to us through the Portuguese *Siao*, and it is the same word as Shan.

It was about the middle of the thirteenth century that the half-legendary national hero, Pra Ruang, threw off the Cambodian yoke, and established at Sukot'hai the first capital of independent Siamese kings. Tradition assigns a much earlier date to this event, which is placed in the year 638 A.D. From this date the old civil calendar of the Siamese is reckoned—the calendar which is still used by the people, though it has been supplanted by the Gregorian calendar for official purposes.² The same date marks the beginning of the "Common Era" of Burmah, but Colonel Gerini has shown that this era was only introduced in the sixteenth century. Up to the year 1500 A.D. those records which bear dates are invariably dated by the Saka era, A.D. 78.³

We are told that Pra Ruang was of humble birth, the son of a small official who superintended the labour of carting water from a famous spring at Lopburi to Angkor Tom for the king's personal use. When little more than a child, Pra Ruang showed that he possessed miraculous power by carrying the water in ordinary baskets. The sovereign, becoming alarmed for his safety if he permitted a being so powerful to grow up, sought to destroy him, but Pra Ruang fled to Sukot'hai, where he entered a monastery. During his subsequent reign many colossal pagodas were erected. The architecture of

¹ Aymonier, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 680.

² The old calendar was a lunar calendar. In the official calendar the years are reckoned from the founding of the present dynasty, 1781.

³ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 224.

his time was often exceedingly graceful, but it belonged to a decadent period which elaborated in brick and plaster the older types of stone.

The oldest inscription in the Siamese language was found at Sukot'hai, and dates from about 1300 A.D.¹ It is engraved in the square Siamese character, which had just come into use. This character was, like Cambodian, derived from Indian alphabets, and the forms of the letters were influenced by the materials used in writing, whether stones engraved with chisels, or palm-leaves written on with styles.²

For a century Sukot'hai remained the capital. During all this time the Cambodian power was wasted by continual warfare with the Siamese, and in 1350 Pra Chao U T'hong founded a new Siamese capital at Ayuthia. This date marks the end of the Cambodian domination in the Menam valley and the beginning of authentic Siamese history.

About this time Javanese records mention an invasion of their island by Cambodians, but these were probably captives who had been forced to fight for their Siamese conquerors.³

It is probable that while the king reigned at Sukot'hai he delegated a portion of his authority to a brother, or to some great official, who reigned in some distant town as a practically independent monarch. Thus Kampeng Pet, on the western branch of the river, is often spoken of as the immediate precursor of Ayuthia as the capital of the Siamese. In an interesting paper read before the

¹ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 223.

² Monograph on the "Language of Siam," by Dr. O. Frankfurter, published in *The Kingdom of Siam*, p. 89.

³ Keane, *op. cit.* p. 207, footnote.

Siam Society, Prince Damrong shows that there is a strong probability that the ancestors of Pra Chao U T'hong moved from Kampeng Pet to the old city of Suvarnabhumi, south-west of modern Supan. The meaning of this name is "The Origin of Gold," or in Siamese *U T'hong*, and the king who reigned there was referred to simply as "the King of U T'hong," or *Pra Chao U T'hong*. This city was abandoned, tradition says, on account of an epidemic; and Pra Chao U T'hong, journeying in a north-easterly direction, crossed the Tachin river at a place still called "The Crossing of King U T'hong," and made his new capital, Ayuthia, on the banks of the Menam.¹

For four hundred years from the foundation of Ayuthia Siam continued a powerful state, generally triumphing over its neighbours, and at times treating on equal terms with China. Whenever the Siamese were successful in their wars vast deportations of prisoners took place, and this in part accounts for the fact that there are now very few Siamese of pure blood. During the sixteenth century the Portuguese established a regular trade with Siam, and in 1555, when the Peguans and Burmese were besieging Ayuthia, the defenders were helped by Portuguese. A curious incident occurred in 1592, when Siam proffered aid to China against Japan, who wished to take possession of Corea. The military reputation of the Japanese was then very great, and a few years before five hundred Japanese mercenaries had helped Siam to repulse an attack from the Burmese.² About this time, too, Siam

¹ The foundation of Ayuthia by H.R.H. Prince Damrong, *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. i.

² *Bangkok Directory*, historical note.

entered into commercial relations with Japan, and for many years there was a large Japanese colony at Ayuthia. The Japanese seem to have occupied almost the same position as Europeans do now, but eventually the jealousy of the Siamese nobles was aroused, and a massacre took place, the survivors being expelled from the country. In later years the Dutch became the greatest traders with the East, and at one time they had a factory, called New Amsterdam, near the mouth of the Menam.

In the reign of Louis XIV. embassies were exchanged between Siam and France. The great King Narai then ruled at Ayuthia, and the splendour of his capital was such that it dazzled even writers accustomed to the court of the *Grand Monarque*. At that time the Dutch had established a strong fort at Malacca, and imposed a toll upon all the ships that passed. The foreign affairs of Siam were managed by the king's great minister, Constantine Phaulcon, a Greek, who first came to Siam as the agent of an English East India merchant, and whose history will hereafter be narrated at greater length. Under the pretext of freeing the Gulf of Siam from the Dutch yoke, but in reality, as some said, designing to bring the kingdom under French domination, and to change the established religion of the country, he prevailed upon the king to show extraordinary favour to the French. Not only did King Narai give them commands in the guards about his person, but they were actually "masters and in possession of the two chief places that open a passage into the kingdom, viz. Bangkok, a great and strong fortress on the mouth of the

River of Siam, and Margen situated on the frontiers.”¹

It is not surprising that the resentment of the Siamese was stirred against the foreigners, as it had been against the Japanese before them. When the king lay upon his death-bed, “Opra Pitrachard,” the minister of his household, seized the reins of power, and the course of events is sufficiently indicated in the title-page of a contemporary work published in 1690, and entitled “A Full and True Relation of the Great and Wonderful Revolution that happened lately in the Kingdom of Siam, in the East Indies. Giving a particular Account of the Seizing and Death of the Late King, and of the Setting up of a New One, as also of the putting to Death of the King’s only Daughter, His Adopted Son, who was a Christian, his two Brothers: and of Monsieur Constance, his Great Minister of State, and Favourer of the French; and of the Expulsion of all the Jesuits, Missionary Priests, Officers and Soldiers of the French Nation out of that Kingdom that endeavoured to bring it under the French Domination. Being the Substance of several letters writ in Octob. 1688 and Febr. 1689. From Siam, and the Coast of Coromandel. Never before published in any Language, and now translated into English.”

The handful of French in Bangkok were besieged by an army of sixty thousand “Mahumetans, Chinese, and Malayans”; but though the garrison only numbered three hundred they successfully beat

¹ From the *Letters* cited below. “Margen” is probably the same as “Mirgin,” a town marked upon an old map of 1596, and apparently corresponding to Ratburi.

off all attacks. After two months' close siege a treaty was signed between Opra Pitrachard and the heroic defender, M. des Farges, whereby the French surrendered the fort of Bangkok, and all the French in Siam had leave to depart. Furthermore, they were to be given "two Frigates belonging to the French Company, a ship of the French King's called the *Auriflame* and a fourth of seventy-four guns that the King of Siam was to give to M. des Farges to embarque on and Transport them out of the King of Siam's Dominions." The usurper Opra Pitrachard was thus left in undisputed possession of the kingdom, and he became the founder of a new dynasty.

This chapter of Siamese history was brought to a close by the Burmese invasion and the destruction of Ayuthia in 1767. Then ensued a period of anarchy. At length P'hya Tak Sin, a man of Chinese extraction, gathered together the bands of dacoits who ravaged the country, and with this army he drove out the Burmans. He then had himself crowned king at Bangkok, which has remained the capital city ever since. P'hya Tak Sin proved a strong ruler. During his short reign he subdued the northern provinces, and compelled certain states in the Malay Peninsula to recognise him as their over-lord. These states had long been ruled by semi-independent princes or rajahs, who were theoretically tributary to Siam, but who often asserted their complete independence when Siam was weak. The suzerainty of Siam was, and still is, acknowledged by sending gold flowers to the capital. In the days of King Narai the

Siamese dominion extended to the Strait of Malacca.

P'hya Tak Sin seems to have eventually gone mad, and in 1781 he was overthrown by the general of his armies, Chao P'hya Chakkri, a pure Siamese, and the founder of the present dynasty. He it was who built the modern city of Bangkok, on the east bank of the river. The old town and palace were on the west bank.

In 1795 the provinces of Battambang and Siemrap were wrested from the waning power of Cambodia; but centuries before this these once populous provinces had sunk back into their original state of pathless jungle. No longer an outlet to the sea, the Great Lake now formed a mere backwater of the Mekong, and the ancient city of Angkor Tom had long since been deserted for a new capital in the plains.

Early in the nineteenth century the Laos were finally conquered, and their king was led captive to Bangkok, whilst Luang Prabang and a large slice of trans-Mekong territory were also brought under Siamese dominion. From that time to the present the history of the Siamese shows a constant effort to consolidate their dominions, and at the same time more intimate relations have been established with European powers. In 1855 a treaty of commerce and friendship was signed between Great Britain and Siam. Similar treaties followed soon afterwards with the other European powers and with the United States. The incessant wars with Cambodia were at length brought to an end in 1863, when France declared a Protectorate over the remnant of that kingdom.

One other important change in the boundaries of Siam took place in 1893, when, as the outcome of troubles with France, she was stripped of the provinces which lay to the east of the Mekong.



FROM THE BAS RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

LOTUS LAND

CHAPTER I

BANGKOK

"Praise teachers while they are present, subordinates after their work is done, and friends when absent."—*Maxim of PRA RUANG.*

AT Singapore the traveller bound for Siam quits the great liner which has brought him from Europe, and taking leave of his friends, who will be careful to let him understand that they do not expect to see him again, he embarks upon one of the small steamers which, at somewhat irregular intervals, take up the mails to Bangkok. If the north-east monsoon is blowing he will have a rough passage up the gulf, and may be glad enough when four days later he sees ahead the low mangrove-fringed shore which marks his destination. Straight for this the steamer makes, and presently he finds that he has entered the muddy Bangkok river.

On either side stretch dreary salt marshes over which the sea flows at spring tides, but these are soon hidden behind the luxuriant vegetation which borders the river. Here on the oozy banks are forests of fern-like attap and rank tropical growths, half submerged, while rising from the firmer ground behind are the slender trunks and graceful fronds

of areca and cocoanut palms. At every bend of the river it is curious to notice how the attaps, which love the mud, cling to the convex bank, whilst they are scarcely ever seen on the concave bank from which the mud has been scoured away. Near the mouth of the river the Siamese customs officers come on board. The traveller will be relieved of any firearms in his possession, but he will have no further trouble, and the firearms can be recovered on the following day if he obtains a permit from his consul.

Bangkok is twelve miles from the coast in a direct line, but so tortuous is the river that it is fully three hours before we see its tall mill chimneys belching forth black clouds of smoke. Here a score of small steamers are anchored in mid stream, and some are taking in cargo from lighters. Others lie alongside the wharfs, together with sailing vessels of all descriptions : bluff-bowed merchantmen from Europe, rice boats from up country, and fishing boats from the gulf. Everywhere, on the lighters and on the busy wharfs, we see the Chinese toiling, and when we pass a lorch a it is a Chinese crew which is hoisting the great mat lug-sails on the stumpy masts. Could we see into the rice mills and saw-mills it would be Chinese coolies whom we should see there also ; in the mercantile offices the clerks are all Chinese, and in the private houses of the European managers the cooks and boys are Chinese too, but at present the river claims all our attention as we thread our way up stream. Boats ply to and fro between the banks, and every now and then the smaller vessels are set dancing and plunging in the wash of the steam launches which tear by. At



HOUSES AND ATTAP PALMS

To face page 32



length we too draw in to a wharf, and land amidst piles of goods. Let us suppose that a merciful providence has relieved us of the necessity of looking after our belongings, and so let us go forth and see what manner of place this is.

Behind the wharfs and mills which line the river on its eastern side, we come upon a long street, white and dusty in the dry months and in the rainy season a lane of filthy mud. Here at all seasons a motley crowd of Chinese, Siamese, Malays, Hindus, and Mahometans jostle each other, while coolies toil along at a foot pace with 'rickshaws in the last stages of dilapidation. A crazy *gharry*, bearing a far-distant resemblance to a London growler and drawn by a diminutive pony, bumps over the uneven surface, and on one side of the road electric trams, packed with natives, are screeching along the ill-laid track. None of these methods of locomotion appeals to us, nor with the tropic sun blazing down out of a cloudless sky do we feel inclined to mingle with the throng of pedestrians. However, if we are lucky we may find near by a stable, at which we can hire a pair-horse *gharry*, a sort of miniature victoria. We will not look on while the ponies are being put in, for it is not well to know exactly how much string is used in the composition of our harness. It is certain that the proportion is large, but if only the reins hold out we must feel thankful. Should they fail us we can trust our driver to tug vigorously at any parts of the harness that come within his reach. He will generally succeed in pulling it all off, and this will have the unexpected result of bringing the ponies to a standstill. Our lives will be spared but much

delay will be caused while the harness is being tied together again. When all is ready we can take our seats, but we must not be surprised if the ponies show a certain reluctance to start. The bystanders will cheerfully push us along, while our driver, a youthful Malay or possibly a Chinaman, stands beside the ponies and applies the lash, until with extreme suddenness they break away at a hand gallop, and we are bounding up the street. The driver springs nimbly to his seat, how we neither know nor care ; for the first few minutes we are too much interested in observing how it is that the other occupants of the road escape destruction to heed aught else. 'Rickshaws scatter and fly before our headlong advance, and should one be tardy in getting out of the way the unfortunate coolie is not likely to escape a sounding cut with the whip.

On either side are rows of one-storied wooden houses. The shops on the ground floor are quite open to the street, and we can see Chinese carpenters, tailors, and bootmakers at work inside, while elsewhere cheap English cotton goods and hardware are displayed. Now and then we pass a Chinese joss-house with fantastic roof-ridge, and through the open door we see an altar decked with tinsel and peacocks' feathers.

A sudden vicious crackle of fireworks, as some Chinaman scares away the evil spirits from his threshold, is too common an incident of the streets of Bangkok to disturb the equanimity of our ponies.

Our driver expects us to direct him at every turning, so if we say nothing he will keep straight on and we shall presently come to the old city wall, whitewashed now, and much disfigured with tele-

graph wires, but with picturesque battlements shaped like the leaves of the sacred Bo tree. Within we are at once sensible of a great improvement as we bowl over the well-kept surface of a broad avenue, planted with plane trees and bordered by neat rows of brick houses. As we cross a canal we catch a glimpse of trees reflected in the water, and trim lawns, and beyond them pagodas blazing with pure gold in the sunlight. This is the official quarter; in it are all the Government offices, the Law Courts, and many of the finest temples; here too is the Royal Palace, whose brilliant roofs and iridescent spires are seen over the dazzling whiteness of the outer wall.

Here let us take leave of our *gharry*, which has brought us a good three miles, and ascend to a spot whence we can obtain a view over all the city. Just outside the city wall is the "Golden Mount," a bell-shaped mound faced with brick, but so overgrown by trees that it has the appearance of a natural hillock. On the summit is a little shrine surmounted by a pagoda, and to it leads a flight of steps, winding around the hill. From here we look down upon a forest of palms and plane-trees, through which break the red roofs of the houses. Everywhere rising above the trees are graceful spires and the manifolded roofs of temples, with their tiles of rich orange or deep purple, great splashes of colour against the clear blue sky. To this place we may often return to watch the dawn stealing over the paddy fields, whilst at our feet the palm-trees rise through a veil of purple mist; or when at evening the pink rays of the setting sun are shooting half way to the zenith we may come

up here and see the thousand pinnacles of Bangkok, outlined in the rifts between low-lying clouds against a smoky orange sky.

But where all this while are the Siamese? Here and there in the crowd we have picked out a Siamese of the better class in white linen coat and *panung*, a graceful garment this, of shot silk draped so as to look not unlike loose knickerbockers; and in the city we may have seen officers of the army, possibly even a prince, in uniform. Perhaps a lady has driven by. She wears a *panung* like the men, and a white tunic much adorned with frills and bows and jewelled brooches, and a sash across it like the insignia of some order. She goes with nothing to cover her short black hair, but she is careful to protect her light complexion with a parasol. The men affect soft felt hats or panamas. Their stockings are generally white, but black is the fashionable colour for ladies.

Of the humbler classes three out of every four whom we have met so far have been Chinese. To see the Siamese we should walk through the city at daybreak, when the streets are thronged with yellow-robed monks slowly moving on and stopping only when some devout person steps forward to put in their bowls a little rice, or sweet-meats or dried fish; by the end of the morning pilgrimage the bowls contain a curious mixture. At this hour too the market is in full swing on the river. Hundreds of boats lie before the palace steps, loaded to the water's edge with fruit and fish of all descriptions, and a babel of sound arises as the chaffering goes on.

But if such an early start does not suit us we



A BANGKOK TEMPLE
WAT CONLAWA NEMIT

must take a *rua chang* (a ferry boat), and row through the small canals or *klongs*. The *rua chang* is rowed by a typical Siamese, not very large but well proportioned, and with skin darkened by constant exposure to the sun. He wears no fine silk *panung*, but only a strip of cotton stuff tucked up around his loins, or else short Chinese trousers. His legs and feet are bare but he may possibly have on a light vest. This is his working dress; when he goes holiday-making he too has a *panung*, even if it be only of cotton, and though he has no coat he has a bright-coloured scarf which he throws over his shoulder, and a flower behind his ear. He stands now in the stern, and propels us with powerful strokes of an oar attached to a post with a turn of string, very much as in Venice the gondolas are rowed, but with a rhythmic movement and a graceful swing of the foot which are peculiar to the Siamese. We have no rudder, but his long oar gives him absolute command over the boat, and he will twist us out from under the very bows of a steam launch. We sit on a transverse seat, and gladly make use of the paper umbrellas with which the boat is provided. Dark spectacles will also add to our comfort, for the glare from the river is terrific.

As we shoot out into the river we see that there is a vast floating population, for on either side are rows of floating houses built on pontoons or on rafts of bamboos, and moored to posts by means of rings which allow them to rise and fall with the tide. Many of these floating houses are shops, bright with cotton stuffs and brass-ware. In front is a platform, and here every morning and evening

the household assemble and cook their rice, allowing it to steam until it is of a flaky consistency without a trace of stickiness. It then bears little resemblance to the repulsively sodden mass which goes by the name of boiled rice in England. When the rice is cooked they all sit round and help themselves with their fingers, flavouring the meal with pinches of dried fish and strong seasonings, selected from a numerous array of little dishes, and for drink they dip a bowl into the river which flows beside them. On these platforms, too, they sit and pour bucketfuls of water over themselves, their clothes sharing in the benefit of a wash.

Still a large proportion of the men that we see are Chinese, but their wives are always Siamese. Let us get out of the main stream and explore one of the numerous by-ways, the lanes of this water city. The western side of the river will be the best for our purpose, and here for miles the small *kelongs* are lined with rows of wooden shanties and floating houses, with an occasional bungalow belonging to some rich Chinaman. They are regular streets, swarming with sampans, steam launches, and boats of every description. The *rua changs* are crowded with passengers, sitting in the bottom of the boat and holding up umbrellas. The larger boats have a semicircular covering in the middle, of bamboo thatched with attap. They are travelling shops and contain a wonderful assortment of cotton stuffs, tins of kerosene, and cocoanuts, and on them whole families spend their lives. Their simple cookery is done on the decked ends of the boat, over an earthen pot containing charcoal.

Amongst these larger craft dart innumerable



A SIAMESE COOLIE "CHAO-ING"

small canoes. Siamese women paddle by with great loads of fruit or highly-seasoned curries and cakes. They wear cotton *panungs* but no shoes or stockings; these are only for the aristocracy. On their heads are round basket-shaped hats, and the younger women have bright scarves thrown loosely over their breasts; when they grow old and wrinkled they will go without this adornment. A monotonous cry heralds the approach of the itinerant butcher, a Chinaman with a board in the bows of his canoe, on which strips of pork are spread. Everywhere naked children are splashing about in the tepid water, wading through the mud or paddling fearlessly along in tiny canoes, delighted when a passing launch makes big waves for them to ride over. Possibly we may also see a monk in his canoe, a thing so crank that without an occupant it will not sit upright, yet the monk can paddle it while standing up, and if by any misfortune he were upset he could bale it out by rocking it from side to side, and then spring straight in out of the water. Before we have gone far we shall have seen enough to realise that the Siamese are an amphibious race, and the finest watermen in the world.

The canoes and sampans are built of planks, while the under-bodies of the larger boats are cut out of solid pieces of teak, upon which the upper part is built up, pegs of hard wood taking the place of nails or bolts. The lines of all are graceful, and show that the Siamese are proficient boat-builders, though they now leave much of this work to the ubiquitous Chinese.

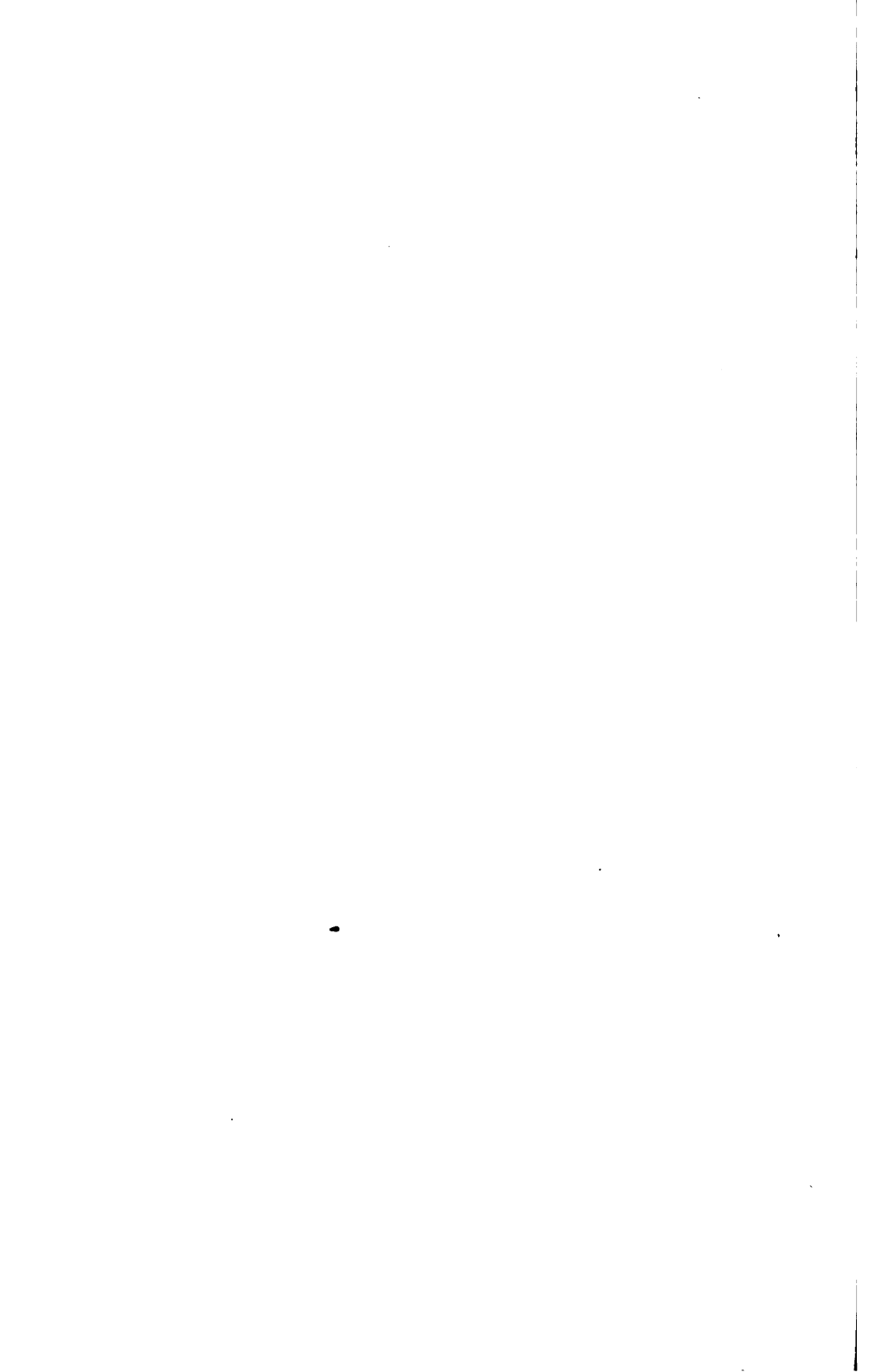
Farther in from the river, away from the busy part, the *klong* is very pretty. The long fronds of

cocoanut palms overhang the water, and the vivid green of the banks is occasionally broken by "the flame of the forest," a tree loaded with scarlet blossoms. Amongst the trees are houses of the typical low-country type. A platform of teak planks is supported on piles, six or seven feet above the level of the ground, and approached by a ladder leading down into the *klong*. Opening on to two sides of the platform are little houses, also built of teak, with graceful gable ends curving upward to a sharp point. In the city the roofs are tiled, but here they are generally thatched with attap. If the people are very poor, perhaps they will only have a platform of bamboos, and the walls of the house will also be of split bamboo and attap interlaced. The platform is often gay with flowering shrubs, amongst which brilliant butterflies flit about. It forms the courtyard, from which it is only a step up to the floors of the houses. The sleeping-rooms are at the back, but in front and open to the platform are deep verandahs, in which the family live during the day.

There we can see the wife, the elder daughters and the white-haired old grandmother, grating cocoanuts for the curry or cutting up dried banana leaves to use for rolling cigarettes. If the master of the house is not away attending to his garden we shall probably see him there too, asleep, or perhaps swinging the baby in a cradle suspended from the roof. On the platform half-a-dozen children are playing, the youngest of whom can only crawl. He is not burdened with clothes, unless a couple of silver rings round his ankles can be counted as such, but his skin is stained a bright yellow with a



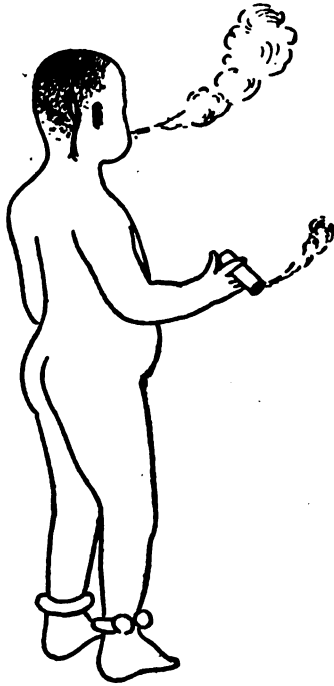
A KLONG



powder which is supposed to keep off mosquitoes. Favourite cats and dogs, particularly if they be white, are also often dyed in this way. The face of the next youngest child is mottled over with white spots, and for a moment we fear that he is suffering from some terrible disease, but they are only the sediment of a solution of chalky clay which his mother has dabbed upon his face to prevent sunburn. He has not even a pair of ankle rings, for they have been passed on to the baby.

His little brothers run about in equally scanty attire, and when not plunging into the mud they are generally smoking cigarettes of the coarse native tobacco. Should one of them be the proud possessor of a cigar, he will generously pass it round amongst his less fortunate companions, and only claim the reversion when they

have all shared in the treat. By the time that they have attained to the dignity of some kind of covering it is time for them to be packed off to school for several hours each day. Their sisters, however, stay at home, pretty little things in *panungs* and dainty be-ribboned chemisettes, with their heads shaved except for a carefully tended



AN INVETERATE SMOKER

top-knot. On festive occasions this is encircled with a wreath of flowers or a chaplet of silver or gold work, for even the poorest households possess some valuable pieces of jewellery. At about the age of eleven this top-knot is cut off, and thenceforth the hair is allowed to grow short and bristly, brushed straight up from the forehead. In the case of boys the ceremony of top-knot cutting is not often observed amongst the poorer classes. Sometimes the top-knot is cultivated for a few years but then, instead of being neatly done up, it is allowed to hang a mere ragged wisp, and by the time the boy goes to school his hair is usually growing in the natural way. Nor is he so particular in after life to keep his hair cut short, and often we may see a man with long picturesque locks.

Old and young all chew the betel nut. This is really the nut of the areca palm, which is cut up and wrapped, together with a little tobacco, in a leaf of the betel vine first smeared with a pink mixture of lime and turmeric. The quid is stuffed away in the cheek, and only so can the pure Siamese accent be produced. To the new-comer their speech is an unintelligible mumble, frequently interrupted by the necessity of getting rid of bright red streams of juice. The effect upon the teeth is, in time, to coat them with a black shiny enamel which acts as a preservative, but the lime causes the gums to shrink away, so that the teeth appear long and protruding. This is particularly noticeable amongst the women, and the habit quickly destroys their good looks. While the little boys are generally content with cigarettes, their sisters have learnt to chew even before their top-knots are cut. The black teeth

used to be considered a mark of beauty, but now that European influences are making themselves felt white teeth are coming into fashion, at any rate amongst the men.

The practice of taking snuff is fairly common. It is amusing to see a Siamese lady produce from her reticule a little copper U-shaped tube which she fills with snuff. One end she inserts in her nostril and through the other she blows. This same reticule contains an amazing assortment of cosmetics—but we must not pry too closely into the toilet of a lady of fashion.

The Siamese are personally extremely cleanly, but unfortunately the same cannot be said of their houses. If we look into the sleeping-room we see mosquito nets black with the dirt of ages, venerable cobwebs, and spittoons in which the betel-juice ejected by many generations has solidified into a hard mass. In those houses which border the *klongs* the refuse is disposed of by pitching it into the water, but if no *klong* is handy it is equally simple to throw it through some interstice in the floor boards, and the ground underneath is often indescribably filthy.

But we must not linger here too long, for at low tide the *klongs* are mere creeks of mud, where even a sampan will stick. Let us return and walk through one of the markets. Our *rua chang* will stop at a flight of wooden steps, and mounting these we pass through a low doorway. A narrow path trampled into thick black mud and covered overhead with strips of dirty canvas, leads between crazy wooden shanties, in front of which are spread on wide slabs every form of Eastern delicacy: strange sweetmeats, cakes, black quivering masses of jelly,

glasses filled with liquors of the hues of aniline dyes, paste of decayed prawns, still living mud-fish, piles of cigarettes and betel nut, fruit of many kinds, and eggs of an antiquity that makes us catch our breath. Farther on are the ironmongers and the drapers displaying gaudy *sarongs*,¹ and all the time we are jostled by a stream of nearly naked Chinamen and fat old Siamese women. Here are pariah dogs of the mangiest and most disreputable description, and probably before we have gone far we shall stumble over a litter of pigs.

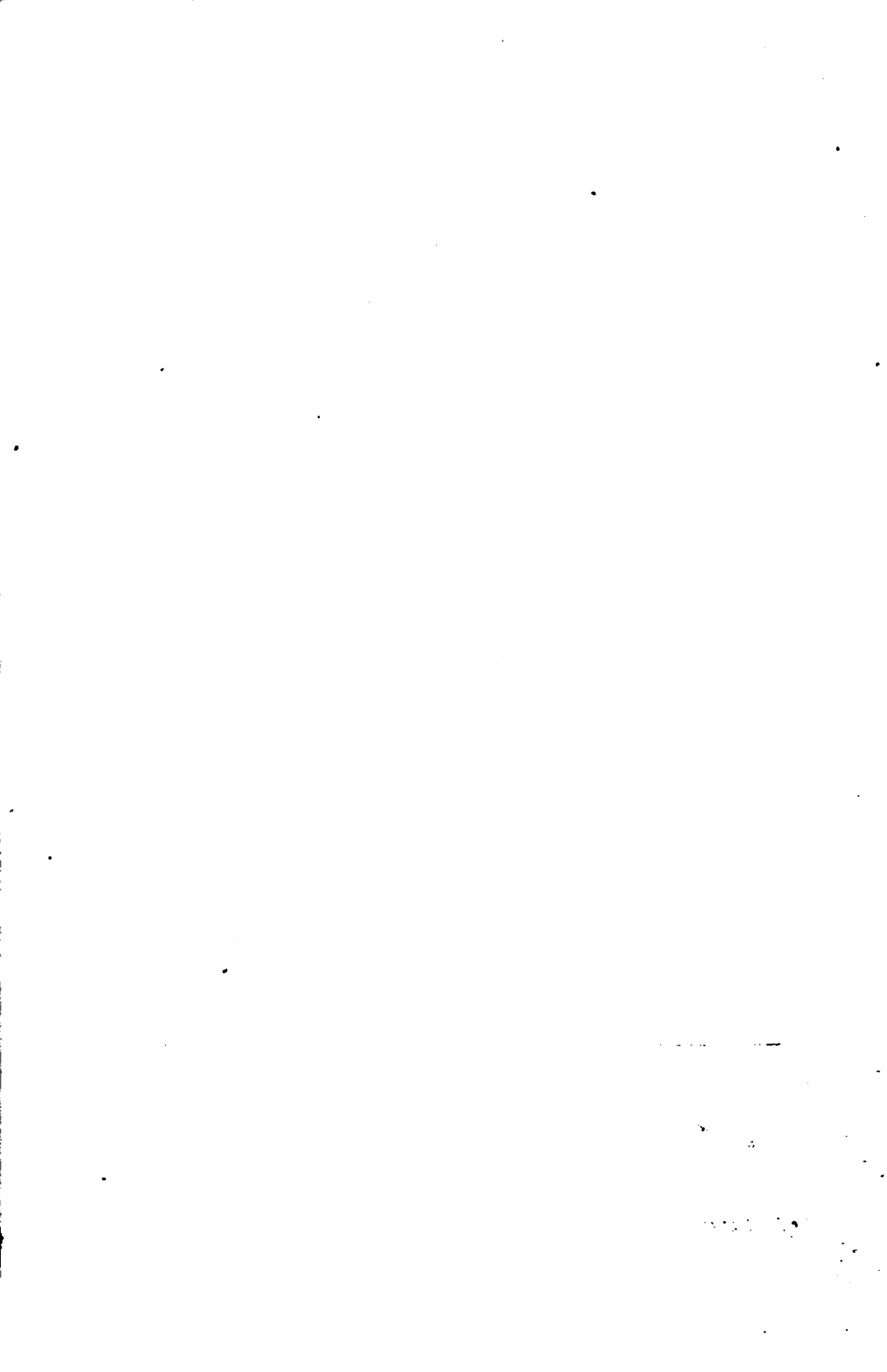
Away from the *klongs*, behind the markets, all is thick garden-land, very pleasant and shady to walk through. Often the paths are bricked and overhung by dense jungly hedges, whilst over all the palm-trees spread a green canopy. In other places the paths consist of planks, raised a few feet off the ground, and as we walk over them they spring and bend until it seems that they must break beneath our weight, yet somehow they always hang together. Every now and then we come to the enclosure of some temple, often deserted and falling into decay, for the Siamese think that they make much merit by contributing towards the building of a new temple, but money spent upon repairs is far less meritoriously employed. In the city the appearance of the temples must be kept up, but here amongst the gardens they serve a few generations of worshippers and then they are allowed to moulder quietly away.

A market garden in Bangkok is very different from anything that we know at home. The trees must be kept out of the water in the rainy season, so ridges are thrown up and the garden consists of

¹ A Malay garment, which forms a close-fitting skirt.



THE MARKET



alternate ridges and ditches filled with water. When a Siamese has placed a single bamboo across one of these ditches he thinks that he has made a good bridge, but to a European wearing boots it is not easy to cross. On the ridges are planted coconut palms, mangoes, mangosteens, plums, oranges, pomelows, jack-fruit and *durians*, and very often there is a thick undergrowth of bananas. If we are thirsty and have a coolie with us, he will climb up the nearest palm and throw us down green cocoanuts filled with delicious milk. The owner will not mind. Indeed they are so good-natured that a coolie has been known to go up to a house and borrow a knife wherewith the more easily to rob the lender's trees.

Of all the fruits around us the most curious are the *durians*, as large as vegetable marrows and covered with sharp spines. Once, long ago, they were described as having the flavour of strawberries and cream, and succeeding generations of writers conscientiously repeated this remark, but at length one, bolder than the rest, said that they reminded him of rotten eggs, and from this blow the *durien* has never recovered. Yet it is not a fruit upon which a hasty judgment should be passed, and to the Siamese, if not to Europeans, it is the greatest of luxuries. Occasionally we may hear a sharp clacking echo through the gardens. Somewhere in the trees around us is a short length of bamboo and a clapper attached to a long rattan which a little boy is pulling to scare away the birds.

A large and evil-smelling district is devoted to the cultivation of betel vines. They are trained up poles, like hops, and amongst them grow the slender areca palms. They require more attention than an ordin-

ary garden, and their cultivation is almost entirely in the hands of Chinese.

No ground rents are paid by the owners of garden-land but an *ad valorem* tax is imposed upon the trees themselves, only those trees which are actually bearing fruit being counted. Thus on a *durien* tree which may be worth two hundred *ticals* (roughly £11, 10s.) the tax is one *tical* per year. For a cocoanut palm worth about twenty *ticals*, one-sixteenth of a *tical* is paid, and so on, a certain fixed sum being levied upon each variety. The counting of the trees is a laborious process and the tax is only readjusted at long intervals, or when the garden changes ownership. Average garden-land in Bangkok is worth from £40 to £100 per acre according to the trees with which it is planted, and the yield per annum from one acre may be very roughly put at from £5 to £15.

Such are the impressions which may be formed in the course of a ramble through the streets and *klongs* of Bangkok, the only large town in Siam. It is the gate by which everybody enters the country and through which practically all the trade of the country passes. The total foreign trade now amounts to over £10,000,000 yearly. The exports exceed the imports in value, and rice so far overshadows all the rest that upon it alone the importance of the port may be said to depend.¹ Next to rice, but of less than one-eighth its value, comes teak, and a long way behind this are dried fish, hides and horns. The chief imports are cotton goods from England and India.

¹ The value of rice exported in 1904 was £4,520,470. *British Consular Report*, Annual Series, No. 3504.

\ Siam owns no merchant vessels and in the carriage of her trade Germany has taken the lead. No large steamers can go up to Bangkok, for at high water there are not more than twelve feet of water over the bar at the mouth of the river. Steamers of greater draught than this must stop outside at the small island, Kaw Si Chang, and trans-ship their cargo into lighters. The Siamese have never considered any scheme for making a deep channel through the bar, although this would obviously be of the greatest benefit to their commerce. They urge that the bar forms their best defence against a hostile fleet, and in 1893, during the troubles with France, they still further obstructed the passage by sinking junks laden with stones in the fairway. Since modern shallow-draught gunboats are well able to force the defences of the river there does not seem to be much in this objection, but it is possible that the removal of the bar would allow the salt water to run up to Bangkok, and turn the river, upon which they depend for drinking water, brackish.

The rice is milled in Bangkok, but the number of rice mills is far in excess of that needful to deal with the supply, and many are perforce standing idle. The Chinese-owned mills are run at a profit, but the competition is severely felt by the large European mills.

The general business of Bangkok is in a very flourishing condition, and such concerns as the Electricity Company, the Tramway Company and the narrow-gauge line to Tachin, pay large dividends.

Out of the population of half a million about one thousand are Europeans, but unlike many

Eastern towns there is no European quarter in Bangkok. Most of the Europeans in the service of the Government live near the city, but the Foreign Legations, the banks and the chief business houses are situated two miles farther down the river.

As regards climate the town compares favourably with Singapore, and the scorching heat of the Indian plains is unknown. From February to April the wind blows generally from the south-east. These are the dry hot months, but the temperature does not often exceed one hundred degrees in the shade. Towards the end of April rain clouds begin to bank up in the west and some heavy showers fall. In June the rains begin in earnest and they last until October. During these months the mornings are often cloudless, but in the afternoon and at night there are terrific storms, with thunder and lightning. The total rainfall, however, is not very heavy—fifty-two inches in the year. November, December and January are the best months of the year. For a few weeks the early mornings are delightfully cool, and at night the temperature sometimes goes as low as fifty-six degrees.

During the dry months the river is low, and the current is insufficient to prevent the salt water from coming up, so that the water turns brackish. The want of a proper water supply is indeed the most pressing need of Bangkok. At present the natives draw their water from the nearest *klong*, and Europeans depend upon rain-water collected in tanks and jars during the rainy season. At Saigon, which is very similarly situated, a magnificent water supply has been obtained from artesian wells. Experiments in this direction are being made for a

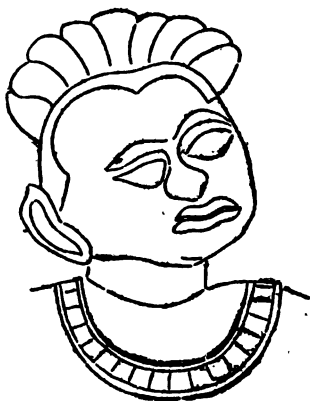
private supply at the new Royal Palace in Bangkok, and at the small town of Prapratom, thirty miles farther west, boring for water has already proved very successful. There seems therefore no reason why Bangkok should not soon be better off in this respect. Of the sanitary arrangements it can only be said that they are remarkable for their simplicity. In the hot season cholera is very prevalent, particularly amongst the Chinese. From some obscure cause the worst epidemics occur at regular intervals, once every three years. The last serious epidemic was in 1903, and the present year, 1906, is an exceptionally bad one. Europeans as a rule have more to dread from fever, and although the precaution of boiling all drinking water must never be neglected, we need not imitate the example of the new-comer who refused to wash except in soda-water.

Year by year acres of small wooden houses and pestilential alleys are being swept out of existence by fire, and gradually a cleaner and healthier town is growing up. A fire once started here must run its course until the wind changes, or until it meets a gap too big for it to cross. Firemen, sailors, soldiers, police and volunteers of all nationalities work heroically at a big fire to tear down the buildings in its course, but the engines are practically useless, and often the first essential, water, is lacking.

The Bangkok police are a smart khaki-clad force. A large proportion are Sikhs, but these are rapidly being replaced by Siamese. There is nothing that the Siamese policeman enjoys more than exerting his authority over a Chinaman, and at times of religious enthusiasm he may be seen herding off to jail a dozen turbulent Chinese coolies at once, all

tied to a long rope by their wrists. Each one of his prisoners is his physical superior, but they never make an organised effort to escape.

Few things can be more annoying than, while driving out to dinner in some remote part of the town, for our carriage to sink without warning up to the axle in a slough, from which it emerges with broken springs. After one or two such experiences we begin to appreciate the irony of the Chinese road-menders, who may be seen filling up the worst holes with stones, one by one. Though the roads are atrocious and foul odours are not uncommon, Bangkok has shared to the full in the general improvement of the country during the last ten years, and the next decade may witness even greater changes. Already a Buddhist monk has been seen riding in a motor car. It is even rumoured that a new Hackney Carriage Act is being enforced. Should this be so the safety of a drive through the streets of Bangkok will doubtless be increased, but much of its romance will be lost.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER II

PRESENT CONDITIONS

"From Fire, Water, Thieves and Governors, Good Lord deliver us."
Prayer of the People.

"I WILL say nothing but what I have seen myself, or what I have learned from the Lord Constance and some other very intelligent Persons, that I may not impose upon the public by false or uncertain Reports. . . . For as to the Orientals, all know that they tell things not really as they are, but as they fancy you could wish they were."

So wrote the Jesuit Father Tachard, who accompanied the embassy sent by Louis XIV. to Siam in 1685, and there in the unchanging East things are very much the same to-day as he described them more than two centuries ago.¹ I shall have frequent occasion to refer to this good Father, whose work deserves to be better known, both for its evident sincerity and the quaint humour which distinguishes it.

¹ *A Voyage to Siam*, p. 263 *et seq.* The title-page reads as follows :—

"A Relation of the Voyage to Siam. Performed by Six Jesuits Sent by the French King, to the Indies and China, in the Year, 1685. With their Astrological Observations, and their Remarks of Natural Philosophy, Geography, Hydrography, and History. Published in the Original, by the express Orders of His most Christian Majesty. And now made English, and illustrated with Sculptures. London, Printed by T. B. for J. Robinson and A. Churchill, and are to be sold by S. Crouch, at the Corner of Popes-Head Alley against the Royal-Exchange, 1688."

The English edition is a rare work, not to be found in the British Museum.

"The Siamese," he says, "are very good natured and civil, they live in good intelligence one with another, and they are not wanting in compleasance to Strangers. . . . So to speak generally, there is a great union in Families amongst them, and out of principle of tenderness for their Parents and Relations, they accuse us of somewhat of hard heartedness, because we leave ours, and go and live far from them in remote Countries, telling us that they may stand in need of us. . . . The respect they have for the King goes as far as adoration. The posture wherein they are to be in his presence is a visible mark of it. . . . When the King goes abroad, all must withdraw, and no body dares to be in his way but they who have express orders for it, unless it be when he has a mind to show himself to his people on certain days of Ceremony."

Fifty years ago Sir John Bowring wrote: "The groundwork of all Siamese institutions and habits is a reverence for authority."¹ This is the explanation of the prostrate attitude which in former times they adopted before the sovereign² and it explains, too, how it is that most Europeans find it so easy to deal with the Siamese placed under them. For the rest, no people could be less servile, and, while perfectly polite, they speak to Europeans as one free man to another.

But though fairly good subordinates, they have, with a few notable exceptions, never shown great administrative ability. Most of the Government departments are now administered with the assist-

¹ Bowring, *Siam*, vol. i. p. 124.

² In 1874 the present King promulgated a decree permitting his subjects to stand upright in his presence.—*Siam Repository*.

ance of European advisers, and a staff of European officials. Lest any European nation should obtain an undue share of influence in Siam these Government posts are distributed amongst men of many nationalities, and even within the limits of a single department this cosmopolitanism prevails. Since, however, the administration of a department is more efficient when men of the same nationality are working together, the tendency is for each department to draw its officers from some one nation in particular. Thus the general adviser to the Government is an American; the State Railways and the Postal and Telegraph Services are managed by Germans; the officers in the Navy and the Provincial Gendarmerie are Danes; Italian engineers are employed on the Public Works and Frenchmen in the Sanitary Department; in the Ministry of Finance, the Customs, the Bangkok Police and the Education, Mining and Survey Departments, the majority of the higher posts are filled by British officials, whilst the Ministry of Justice, to which Belgians were formerly appointed, is now advised by an Englishman and a Frenchman who, in theory at least, have equal powers.

It must be clearly understood that any measure suggested by a European adviser is subject to the approval of the Siamese Minister of his department. Nevertheless, even if their proposals do not meet with favour, the mere presence of Europeans in high quarters acts as a wholesome check upon the Siamese official classes, and the Siamese themselves are the first to admit that were this check removed corruption would be rampant amongst them.

Without European direction little would be accom-

plished, for the Siamese are wanting in the power to apply continuous effort towards a single end, and are prone to leave a task half finished in order to take up something new. Under the present system just enough of the energy of the nation is devoted to necessary work to enable the country to keep within measurable distance of the times, but on the least excuse serious work is suspended and all this energy flows back into its natural channel, the preparation of gorgeous pageants and shows.

In the reign of King Mongkut (1850-1868), "Siam may be said to have passed from the middle ages to modern times. . . . What European countries were allowed to accomplish gradually, Siam by circumstances had to accomplish within a few years. And these changes were not brought about by pressure of the people, but by the governing classes who had to educate the people to these new conditions: the governing classes themselves were sometimes averse to changes lest such should interfere with their privileges, and then it was the King who guided them."

In these words Dr Frankfurter sums up the progress made during the reign of the present King's father.¹

The present King, Chulalongkorn, has always been an enlightened and liberal-minded monarch, but for long the reforms which he attempted to introduce were more apparent than real, and when in 1893 the French gunboats sailed up to Bangkok, the kingdom of Siam seemed near its end. It is difficult to realise the apathy of the King and the

¹ A paper on "The Reign of King Mongkut" by Dr. Frankfurter, published in *The Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. i.

levity of his court in the midst of events touching the very existence of the nation, and Henry Norman's book, written shortly afterwards, gives a vivid picture of the state into which the country had sunk.¹ But in the last decade a very real improvement has taken place. The King has fulfilled the high promise with which he began his reign, and a general quickening of the entire nation is apparent.

At the beginning of 1896, England and France jointly guaranteed the independence of the Menam valley, and it rested with the Siamese themselves either to make a fresh start or to allow things to drift on until annexation became inevitable. They did not misuse their opportunity. The old generation of officials, who, while they assented to the reforms of the King, opposed to them such a dead weight of inertia that at length the King himself despaired, were replaced by younger men. Government departments were not merely reorganised but constructed afresh, and in all this colossal work M. Rolin Jacquemyns, the general adviser to the Government, bore a foremost part. Yet as no reform can be permanent that comes wholly from without, it is of good augury for Siam that the present improved condition of the country is due to no one more than to Prince Damrong, the King's half-brother and Minister of the Interior.

He has revived the old system of village government which prevailed in early times amongst the Tai-Shans, and which prevails in a modified form in

¹ Henry Norman, *Peoples and Politics of the Far East*, chaps. xxvi.-xxx. The best description of the action at Paknam, in which the French gunboats forced the defences of the river, is to be found in Warrington Smyth's *Five Years in Siam*, vol. i. p. 255 *et seq.*

Burmah at the present day.¹ Over every hamlet there is an elder, the Pu Yai Ban, who is answerable for its well-being; each collection of hamlets is under a Kamnun, elected by the elders; each district is under a Nai Ampurr; above the Nai Ampurrs comes the Governor of the "Muang," and finally over each province or "Monthon" is a High Commissioner appointed by the King, and directly responsible to the Minister of the Interior. Thus in the remotest parts of the kingdom every hamlet is under the control of the central Government.

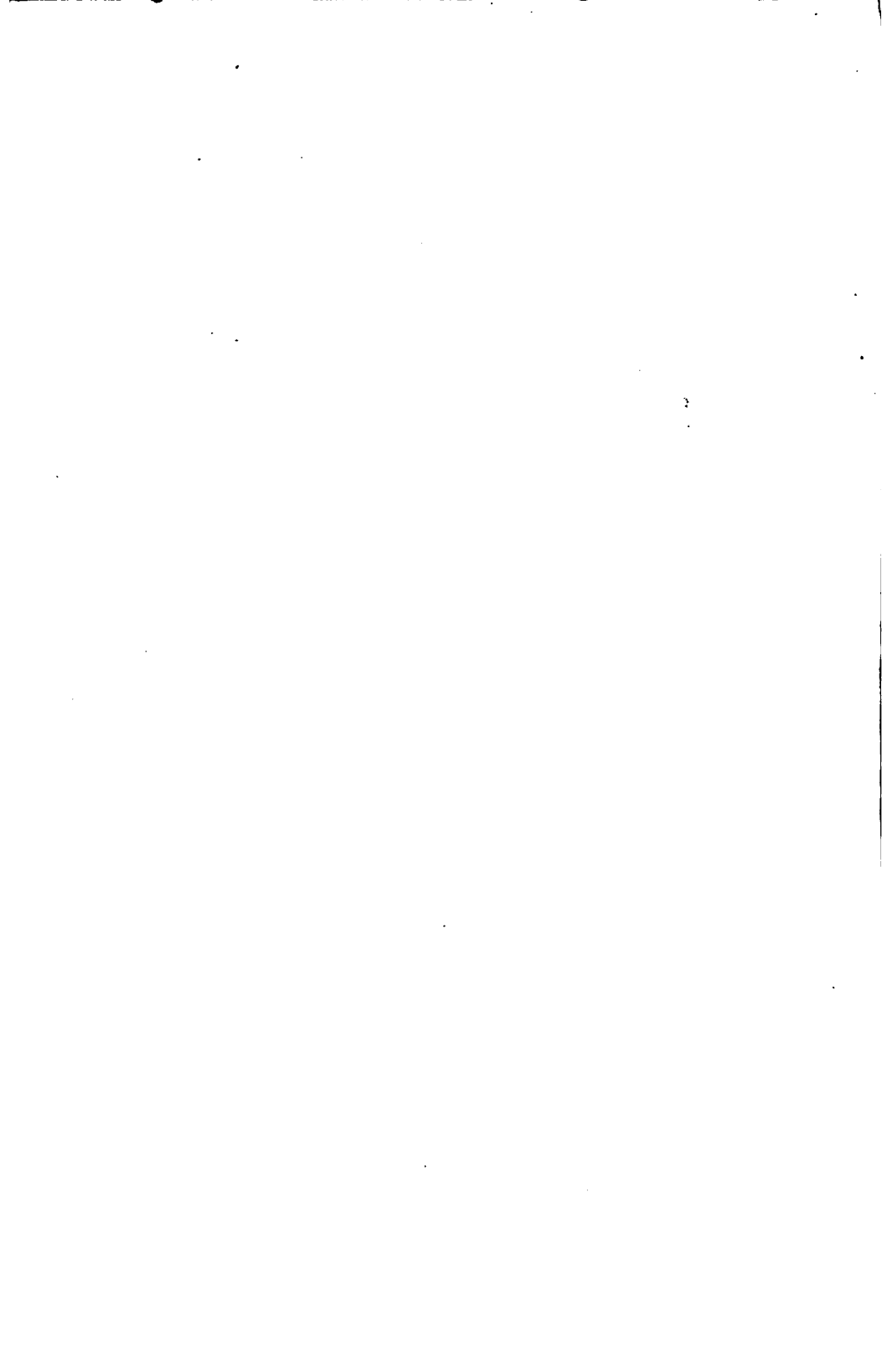
In the old days the great lords of outlying provinces were almost independent chiefs. As long as they remitted a certain revenue to Bangkok every year no one interfered with them, and they wrung what they could out of the people for their own profit. Under the new régime they had to accept the position of salaried officials of the Government. The change was very great. But though the condition of the people was ameliorated they reaped no benefit from the revenue which flowed into the central treasury. The money collected from them was all spent on showy improvements in Bangkok, while the most pressing needs of the provinces were neglected. In regard to a more equitable adjustment of expenditure between the provinces and the capital much still remains to be done.

The King is in theory absolute master of the lives and property of all his subjects, but in practice he is assisted by a Council of Ministers, and any measure decided upon by them will probably receive his sanction. The law of succession in Siam is sufficiently elastic to enable a weak and incapable

¹ *Siam Local Administration Act, 1897.*



A SIAMESE FARMER AND WIFE



prince to be passed over. In some past ages it seems that the King's brothers were preferred before his children, to whom, however, the crown reverted on the death of their uncles, and sometimes the succession was settled by the votes of the chief nobles.

The great King Narai, who had no son, proclaimed as his heir a young nobleman whom he adopted. Whatever advantages this plan may have had in a rude age, when to be strongly ruled was the first essential of the state, the importance of a settled succession is now so manifest that, in future, the heir-apparent will almost certainly be the eldest son of the First Queen. Thus King Chulalongkorn succeeded without opposition to his father's throne in 1868, though only fifteen years of age, and ruled during his minority under a regency. By immemorial custom, the First Queen, the mother of the Crown Prince, is the King's half-sister.¹

During the present dynasty there has generally been a Second King, a curious institution for which there is ancient precedent in Indo-China. This office has been in abeyance since the death of the late Second King in 1885. In Siam the Second King had no real power, and he was practically appointed by the supreme King, but on the death of the latter the Second King retained his office.

Outside the Royal family there are no hereditary titles in Siam, and even direct descendants of the King only bear titles for three generations. As a

¹ We read that the Sakya princes, from whose race Gautama the Buddha sprang, being defrauded of their birthright, established a new kingdom in forests which they found uninhabited. In the absence of any other princesses of sufficiently illustrious descent to be fit mates for them, they took their sisters as their wives, and were thence called Sakya, or Self-potential. Alabaster, *The Wheel of the Law*, p. 173.

man ascends in the service of the Government he receives the insignia of his rank and the titles belonging to his office. A man of the lowest birth may ascend to be a Minister and there is absolutely no caste feeling. There is a very small middle class and all of these aspire to some Government office, the majority being employed as clerks and the like. They bear no family names, and as a rule each step of promotion which is marked by a higher title is also signalised by the taking of a new name. The great bulk of the population is peasantry, whose sole occupation is agriculture.

In Bangkok and in every large village there is a strong Chinese element. Almost the entire retail trade of the country is in their hands, for they possess a sound business capacity, and a native honesty to which the lower class Siamese can lay no claim. How often has it been said that a Chinaman's word is his bond? The Chinese also do most of the market gardening, which involves more labour than rice planting. They are the 'rickshaw pullers, and, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, they perform all the drudgery of the country while the Siamese exist in a state of blissful repose. If some philanthropist were to give a Siamese coolie a 'rickshaw and tell him to earn his living by pulling it in the streets, he would not reply "I don't want to," but "I cannot." Yet somehow the coolie is never without a few coppers, and when next the philanthropist set eyes upon his protégé it would be to see him riding in the 'rickshaw, with a Chinaman in the shafts.

In the small hamlets and scattered homesteads which cover the face of the country the proportion

of Chinese is not so great, for they are a gregarious race. In 1904 the first detailed census was taken in Siam, but it only includes twelve out of the twenty provinces. Upon this basis the total population of Siam has been calculated to be 6,686,846 persons, and it is thought that not more than ten per cent. are Chinese. In the twelve provinces for which accurate statistics are available the proportion is considerably less than ten per cent., but they do not include the province of Bangkok in which it is certainly much higher.

Buddhism is the religion of the country, but the utmost toleration has always been shown, and no political or social disability attaches to those who profess another faith. At a time when religious persecution was at its height in Europe, Christian missionaries were welcomed in Siam, where, if they have made few converts, they have done much good from a medical and educational point of view. In many countries, notably in Tibet, the Buddhist religion has become overlaid with a mass of esoteric doctrine and metaphysical teaching; in Japan the worship of local divinities, under the guise of incarnations of the Buddha, has almost altogether obscured the figure of the Great Teacher, and who shall say what it is that the Chinese Buddhist worships, as he bows before the image in his joss-house? But in Siam, as in Burmah and Ceylon, Buddhism still exists in something like its pristine form. Brahminism also survives in many an old rite and custom. But the real religion of the mass of the people is a sort of fetish-worship: for them, as of old, the jungles and rivers are peopled with spirits, whom they ardently desire not to see, and

their belief in the power of charms to ward off evil remains as firm as ever it was in pagan times.

Nevertheless, they neglect no opportunity of "making merit," and the vast number of Buddhist monks in the country is supported entirely by the daily offerings of the people. Almost every male Siamese enters a *wat* or monastery for some months at least, and many remain there all their lives. During his sojourn in the *wat* he puts on the yellow robe, shaves his head, and is subject to all the rules of the order, but he is free to leave and return to the world whenever he likes. As a child, too, every Siamese boy goes to the village *wat* to learn from the monks. Ability to read and write is more universal amongst Siamese men than it was until very recently in England, but beyond this their education does not go very far.

There is now a regular Education Department with well-organised schools in Bangkok. In some of these schools English is taught, and there are also schools for girls. It is pleasing to find that the old *wat* schools are not being swept away, but are as far as possible being used as the basis of the new scheme, so that whilst the higher education must necessarily pass into the hands of secular teachers the *wats* will always remain the primary schools. Many of the princes are sent to public schools in England, but the results of this have been somewhat disappointing, and it is noticeable that the best men in the country were educated entirely in Siam.

"Marriage, according to Siamese law and customs, is a contract between man and wife, to which the ordinary principles which attach to other contracts



SIAMESE GIRLS

To face page 6.



are applicable, and it is consequently validly celebrated whenever it clearly results from the words exchanged or from the rites observed that both parties freely consent to take each other as man and wife, provided he or she does not labour under some particular disability.”¹ The marriage tie can be dissolved as easily as it is formed, and polygamy is permitted, but the ordinary peasant contents himself with one wife and to her he remains very faithful. Women do not occupy at all an inferior position in Siam, and they enjoy at least as much freedom as in European countries. Only in the immediate *entourage* of the King do we find harems rivalling that of Solomon. Alabaster suggests that it may not always have been sensuality which led the king of Siam to take so many wives, but an attempt to bind all the most influential families to his interest by placing their daughters in his harem. The efficiency of such a method is very open to question, and in order to prevent jealousy it was necessary that every family of any importance should be represented.

The ancient laws of the country were derived from the Laws of Manu, which came to Siam through the Peguans, and they differed from their original only in being stated in more precise terms. A portion of the old code was lost at the sack of Ayuthia, and the laws as they then existed were collected in the reign of Pra Puttha Yot Fa (1808).² To quote again from Father Tachard, “Justice has no less sway among them than friendship and peace.

¹ Sect. i. of Decree issued on the valid celebration of marriages in Siam. Translation published in the *Government Gazette*, 9th January 1898.

² Frankfurter, *op. cit.*

When any Ship is cast away upon their Coast, there is a Law that obliges those who have taken up any thing of the Wreck to bring it to the chief Town, to be afterwards given to those to whom the effects belonged ; which is also observed in relation to Strangers." ¹

Unfortunately, admirable though the laws are, the administration of justice is very faulty, and this is perhaps the department in which reform is most needed. Much has been accomplished of late years, but still the provincial courts are very corrupt, and even in Bangkok bribery is not unknown. That even-handed justice should be dispensed in a court of law is a conception to which few Siamese are capable of rising. I have known of many instances in which a Siamese who had got into trouble turned to his European officer, and requested that he would use his influence to procure the favour of the judge. The Siamese could never understand why the European should refuse to do this, for surely, he thought, it ought to be the duty of one in authority to protect those over whom he is set.

Except in a few outlying provinces, the courts are not now under the management of the executive authorities, but have been taken over by Judicial Commissioners directly responsible to the King. The lower courts are also subject to a Court of Appeal in Bangkok, the procedure being by written arguments, so that it is not necessary to appear personally before the Appeal Court. Appeal is therefore rendered so easy that systematic use of it is made by litigants, yet were it more difficult

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 268.

the evil would be greater, for there would be no redress when the lower courts had been bribed.

As a salutary check upon the bringing of frivolous actions, it was customary in former times to cast the plaintiff into prison, together with the defendant and witnesses, pending the hearing of the case. There they sometimes remained for years, and when at length they were remembered the cause of quarrel had long since been forgotten, and none could say which really was the defendant and which the plaintiff.

In the old statute books many very barbarous punishments were laid down, but all of these have been abolished and, if anything, the sentences now passed err on the side of mercy. The death sentence, by decapitation, is very rarely inflicted and even whipping is little resorted to. In the middle ages trial by ordeal was often decreed by the ancient Siamese code, when the litigants had either to walk on fire or to undergo the ordeal by submersion. In the latter case they were compelled to remain under water, while an officer of the tribunal measured the time by retaining his breath as long as he could. "After he has taken breath for the third time, four executors of important works will assist in taking the two litigants from the water. If one of them has been unable to bear submersion so long and has emerged from the water before, the executors will withdraw the winner from the water, while the judges will ask the loser for what reason he has come to the surface."

So runs the Act, and it ends quaintly enough, "If at the end of thirty-six minutes neither accuser

nor accused has reappeared, it will be necessary to pull both out of the water."¹

Even in those days judges were venal. We read of a wood-cutter who acted as judge in a trial by immersion, and who held the stakes while the disputing parties underwent the ordeal. The first to emerge, seeing that he had lost, took to his heels. Soon after the second came up, but he was persuaded that the other man was still under water, so abandoning everything he ran home, leaving the wood-cutter master of the situation.

A yearly budget is issued and shows that the revenue of the country is rather more than two and two-thirds millions sterling, with a small surplus over expenditure. It has sometimes been stated that the people groan under the weight of taxation but, on the contrary, the taxes are extraordinarily light. The bulk of the population are small freeholders, whose only necessity is rice, and the only taxes which affect them are the land tax and a small tax on boats. It is true that the very fruit-trees and the fishing stakes are taxed, but nothing is paid for the land on which the fruit-trees grow, and in these waters which teem with fish it is only right that the fisheries should contribute something. Moreover, both fruit and fish may be looked upon as luxuries.

Nearly one-third of the revenue is derived from the Opium and Gambling monopolies, which are farmed out every year to the highest bidders. These are invariably Chinese, who eventually return to

¹ "The Judgment of God, or Trial by ordeal in the country of the White Elephant according to the ancient Siamese Code," by the Right Rev. Bishop M. Jos. Cuaz (Vicar-Apostolic of Laos), published in the *Revue Indo-Chinoise*, 15th January 1905, and republished in the *Bangkok Times*, 7th February 1905.



A COOLIE

To face page 64

their own country, taking with them the enormous profits which they have made. The number of gambling-houses is strictly limited, and anybody who desires to gamble elsewhere must obtain a licence from the gambling farmer to do so. Gambling is a national instinct, and it is in the last degree exceptional for a coolie to put by any money. As soon as he receives his pay he will go off to the nearest gambling-house and stop there until it is finished. If he is lucky it may last him a week ; if the luck is against him he has to return to work the next day. It is his form of amusement and he never contemplates the possibility of making money by it.

Opium-smoking and gambling are the curses of the country and are largely responsible for the amount of theft which takes place. The number of petty thefts is really appalling. In the year 1903-4 5,570 cases of theft were reported in Bangkok province alone, with its population of 750,000, which exceeds the number of cases in the whole of southern Burmah with a population of six millions.¹ Yet I do not believe that this is the result of innate depravity, but only of a careless disregard of the rights of property. The Siamese have a passion for pretty clothes and jewelled rings and, like children, they instinctively take what they want. Indeed, the Commissioner of Police in Bangkok once said that they had the predatory instinct more highly developed than any other race he knew of.

Bad as things are, however, they were far worse before the passing of a Pawnbrokers' Act made it difficult to dispose of the stolen property. The

¹ See the Report of the Judicial Adviser for the year 122, Bangkok era.

Government is now making an attempt to remedy the state of affairs by going to the root of the matter and closing the gambling-houses. The revenue thus lost will be compensated for by increasing the land tax, but by treaty this tax cannot be higher than that imposed in lower Burmah. Hitherto it has not amounted to more than one-third of the tax in Burmah, but under the new graduated rate it will be from one-half to two-thirds as much as the Burmese peasant has to pay under British rule. If the scheme is carried out, there will not be any gambling-houses left except in Bangkok by the end of 1906. Before the Government can afford to lose the revenue which results from the valuable gambling farms of the capital, certain additional taxes and duties must be imposed, and this can only be done with the consent of the foreign Powers with whom treaties have been made. Opium-smoking has probably an even worse effect than gambling, but it affects a smaller number of Siamese and is, perhaps, a necessity to the Chinese who form such a large part of the population.

Up country dacoity is rife, and the local gendarmerie are insufficient in number to put it down.

Yet, as I have said, the Siam of to-day is very different from the Siam of ten years ago. As a striking instance we have only to look at the success achieved by the Paper Currency Department, whose notes to the value of over ten million ticals are now in circulation. Ten years ago Henry Norman wrote, "It was indeed a fortunate day for Siam when it was finally decided to put away on the shelf, unused and unissued, the hundreds and thousands of new legal tender Treasury notes of the Royal Siamese

Treasury. The dismay that had spread amongst the officials both native and European throughout the country at the idea of being paid in Siamese paper promises was an eloquent proof of the character of the National good faith."¹ The formation of a National Debt is not, perhaps, a happy instance to give of a country's prosperity, but the ease with which a Siamese loan was floated in London and Paris in 1905 forms a pleasing commentary on the above passage.

An important step taken by the Treasury within recent years has been to stop the free coinage of silver. *Ticals* are now sold to the banks at a fixed rate as they may be required, and it is hoped in time to accumulate out of the profits of the sale a sufficient reserve to establish a gold standard, with an exchange of fifteen *ticals* to the pound sterling.²

Throughout his chapters on Siam, Henry Norman gives instances of the subordination of National interests to royal luxury. In this respect, too, there has been improvement. Thus, speaking of the railway, he says, "There does not appear to be the slightest probability of this line ever being completed under the present régime, except, perhaps, as far as the King's palace at Bang-pa-in."³ It is now possible to go by rail to Korat (264 kilometres) or to Pechaburi (151 kilometres); whilst the line to Chieng-Mai, the capital of the north, is slowly pushing forward, and has already reached Paknam Po (160 kilometres from the junction with the Korat line). No alarming rate of progress this, truly, yet

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 429.

² Throughout this book the value of the *tical* is taken as 1s. 2d.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 457.

it is not entire stagnation. The line to Pechaburi is chiefly important as forming a link in a possible line down the Malay Peninsula, which might ultimately connect Bangkok with Penang and Singapore. The construction of such a line would be very costly, but it would be politically of far greater importance than the line to Chieng-Mai, for whilst bringing Siam into closer touch with Europe it would strengthen her hold over the Malay States. In a significant article published not long ago in a Saigon paper, the Siamese are encouraged to build this line as the only means of checking the further absorption of the Malay States by England.

On the lines already built the returns show that three-fifths of the receipts are from passenger traffic. The trains are run at a rate which compares favourably with stopping trains in England, and the fares are very low. The proportion of goods traffic is slowly increasing, but water must always remain the chief means of transport, and it is of more importance to improve the existing canals than to multiply railways. The railways, besides, are not without their bad side, for they enable the country people so easily to come into Bangkok and gamble away the price of their rice crop. That they actually have such an effect is shown by the great increase in value of the Bangkok gambling farm since the railways were started.

Outside Bangkok and a few of the larger villages roads do not exist in Siam, with the exception of rough cart tracks, impassable in the rainy season. In this respect Siam compares unfavourably with the neighbouring French provinces, where good roads have been made on slight embankments.



A MONK



Amongst the most important of recent enactments is the Land Registration Act, under which title-deeds, based on the actual survey, are issued to all holders of land whether prince or peasant. Henceforth the boundaries of their land are settled beyond dispute, and a fruitful source of litigation is being done away with. It may be noted that no restriction is placed on the holding of land by Chinese, whilst Europeans are permitted to buy or rent land situated within certain limits.

The most memorable of all the King's acts, and one of the earliest of his reign, was that in which he decreed that after 1868, the date of his accession, no Siamese could be born in the status of slavery. It was a common custom for both men and women, having gambled away all their possessions, to sell themselves and their families in order to discharge their debts. They were fed, clothed and protected, and in return for these advantages they were content to work for the rest of their lives. Theoretically the debt could be worked off at a fixed rate, but in practice this was seldom done. Though forbidden by law this form of slavery still exists, and as long as the people voluntarily sell themselves it is difficult to see how it can be prevented.

The sale of a wife by her husband without her own consent, and of children above the age of fifteen, was made illegal in the reign of King Mongkut. King Mongkut was accustomed to receive petitions from his people and to examine them personally on every "Wan Pra,"¹ a right which the Siamese seem to have enjoyed from

¹ The Buddhist Holy day, occurring on first and eighth day of the waxing and waning of each moon.

olden days. A drum was hung outside the gate of the palace and on this the petitioners beat, so that "to beat the drum of the palace" meant to present a petition. Having been petitioned by a girl whose parents wished to compel her to marry a certain man against her will, King Mongkut decreed "that parents are not owners of their children in the same way as the owners of cattle and elephants may put a price on them and sell them, or like the money master who has a slave of a fixed value and may sell him for such fixed value." He also laid down the law that money tendered for the redemption of a debtor must at once be accepted.¹

Quite apart from this debt-serfdom every one in the kingdom owed service to some over-lord. In theory all were the serfs of the King, who delegated a portion of his authority to the Governors of the provinces. The personal service which was exacted from the people was chiefly for the benefit of the Governors themselves, yet some public works were attempted and, so far as these are concerned, the provinces were perhaps better off in the old days than they are at present. The Governors still have the right to demand labour from the people, but it must be paid for at the local rate of wages. A very large number of men are still dependants of the various Government services and are, in a sense, the serfs directly of the King himself. These men, from the age of eighteen to sixty years, are supposed to render three months' service a year, but personal service is now generally commuted for a small payment known as the Capitation tax.

¹ Frankfurter, *op. cit.*

This system was seen at his worst in the army, in which prisoners of war and their descendants for ever were compelled to serve. These men were tattooed upon the forearm, and their children were tattooed when a few months old, so that gradually there grew up a regular military caste, who were naturally inefficient as soldiers and despised by the rest of the people. The officers were Siamese, and their children also were liable to be taken and made to serve.

In 1905 conscription was established in four provinces, and it is to be extended to two others in 1906. In these provinces the old dependants of other departments, men who have hitherto, for the most part, paid the Capitation tax, are now transferred to the Ministry for War, and cannot therefore claim exemption from the conscription. Payers of annual taxes above a certain value, monks, and some others, are however exempt, and certain educated classes are reserved for officers. With these exceptions everyone must serve three years continuously with the colours between the ages of eighteen and forty. After the three years are over they are placed in three classes of reserves, liable to be called out in time of emergency.

The Chinese are not called upon for military service, nor do they pay the Capitation tax, but only a small triennial tax.

The paper strength of the army is very different from its real strength. Up country whole villages are deserted by the men-folk when the time comes round for them to serve, and the recruiting sergeant returns with a band of old men and even women, taken as hostages for the appearance of their sons,

who, probably, are amusing themselves meanwhile with a little dacoity. As a fighting force the army cannot be taken very seriously. The soldiers are the worst element of the population and wherever a garrison is stationed brawls and disturbances are of constant occurrence.¹ During the late Shan rebellion the troops who were sent up north looted the shops and established a reign of terror on their way through Paknam Po, while in almost the only conflict that took place the Siamese ran away unhurt, and a Danish officer of gendarmerie who was attempting to lead them against the enemy was shot. It is not that the individual Siamese lacks courage. When his blood is up he possesses courage of the most reckless sort, but he is entirely without *esprit de corps*,² and has no idea of patriotism as we understand it. A Siamese who ran from the battle would not be ashamed of the fact, nor would he feel the least hesitation in admitting that he did so because he was afraid.

The Siamese themselves are fully aware that in regular operations against European troops they would have no chance, but they say that they would rely upon guerilla warfare. For this the training of the men, on German lines, seems especially ill-fitted. As it was in Burmah, so it would be in Siàm—a European force could over-run the country with the utmost ease and the Siamese army would run away; but after, when they saw Europeans

¹ I am necessarily speaking of the time before conscription was established. Under the new conditions the soldiers in the provinces appear to be completely out of hand. Many Europeans now in Siam believe that the army is a grave menace to the country, for by its lawlessness it may provoke outside intervention.

² The rivalry which exists between the various schools in Bangkok has, however, of late years done something to foster this spirit.



CHILDREN



A FARMER AND CHILDREN

To face page 72

sitting in the high places, who can tell what hidden fury of revolt might blaze forth?

For a navy there seems even less reason than for an army, but it must be said that the sailors are in all respects far smarter than the soldiers. The greatest stimulus that could be given to the prosperity of Siam would be to disband the army altogether, whilst the gendarmerie stations should be trebled or quadrupled throughout the country. At present, however, the tendency is all the other way, and so the army remains, a useless burden on the revenue of the country, whilst the fields are depleted of workers.

Although the leading characteristic of the Siamese may be a disinclination for any hard and sustained form of labour, it must be confessed that this is generally shared by those Europeans who live in hot countries. Moreover it is only true of the men in Siam, for the women are hard workers, keen business people and the backbone of the country. As to the men then, one of their best friends was indignant that they should be called "incorrigibly idle," but when asked to substitute a phrase he could only suggest as an alternative "incurably indolent." Yet they, too, are not incapable of work when they clearly understand that it is to their own advantage: during the time of ploughing and sowing and reaping, they work hard enough. Coolies will cheerfully continue to row our house-boat for a day and a night, that they may enjoy a day of idleness at the end of it. A little higher in the social scale anxiety for promotion in the Government service will often act as an incentive, and some display a real and intelligent interest in their work. Amongst

the Siamese surveyors I know very many who do splendid work, toiling all day long under the burning sun.

We must not judge them by our standards. They are perfectly happy ; why should they spend their days in strenuous labour ? The hideous squalor, the abject misery of our great cities are things utterly apart from their lives : the cry of starving children is to them unknown. And their wants are very simple. To us the piling up of one coin upon another means so much, but the Siamese are content to lie in the shade of the bamboos and laugh and smoke, while the rice grows up for them to eat.

For them there is no future like that of the Japanese ; it is doubtful if they will ever be able to do without European advice. Whether they will retain their independence is an interesting question. The French colonial party is continually clamouring for the absorption of the provinces of Siemrap and Battambang, and indeed by the Anglo-French agreement French "influence" is declared to extend to these provinces, whilst British "influence" extends over the whole of the Malay Peninsula. Thus far then Siam is liable to further aggression, but in all probability the basin of the Menam, the heart of Siam and by far its most valuable part, will always be allowed to remain an independent buffer state. But this is looking far ahead, and no further change in the map of Siam need be anticipated during the lifetime of the present King. The success of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war has caused France to turn anxious eyes towards her possessions in the Far East, and she would be most

unwilling to incur fresh responsibility in that quarter. Still less would she be inclined to interfere with the *status quo* in the face of the Anglo-Japanese treaty.

But another fate may overtake the Siamese. The country is very thinly populated, and vast tracts of rich land are left uncultivated for want of workers. The irrigation company, backed by European capital, will naturally seek fresh concessions, and the wealthy Bangkok princes are always ready to buy the land opened up by the cutting of new canals, for rice farming is very profitable; but who will till the fields? At present the Siamese are lords of the soil, and so they may remain if the country is allowed to develop only in proportion to the natural expansion of its population. But the population, for long almost stationary, is even now increasing very slowly. This is partly due to the large proportion of Siam's manhood shut up in the *wats*; more, perhaps, to terrible epidemics of small-pox, and to the very high rate of infant mortality. Vaccination has been successfully introduced, and with the greater prosperity of the people and the spread of sanitary knowledge amongst them, a higher rate of increase may be looked for in the future. Meanwhile it is to be feared that the greed of capitalists will hasten the slow process of development by the importation of Chinese labour on a large scale, and the already great number of Chinese in the country will be vastly augmented. The Siamese, if not entirely swamped in the Chinese population, will at least become profoundly modified by inter-marriage. Even now, in many districts, the Siamese women prefer a thrifty Chinese husband to the lethargic Siamese.

Perhaps, after all, this would be the happiest solution for the country's future. The children of this mixed parentage are amongst the brightest class in the country. They speak Siamese, have no particular reverence for the pigtail, which they as often as not dispense with, and in their sympathies and manners they are entirely Siamese.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER III

THE BUDDHIST RELIGION

“Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?”—*The Rubaiyat.*

THOSE who read on will find much that is not in keeping with the teachings of Buddhism, set forth in this chapter ; so much that it may seem that little of Buddhism is left. Yet how are we to understand the beliefs of a people if we know nothing of the religion which underlies all, and upon which these beliefs have grown up? And I must say something of Brahminism too, for not only did Buddhism grow out of Brahminism somewhat as the Protestant Church grew out of the Church of Rome, but in Siam the two religions for long existed side by side, and became so interwoven that to this day many purely Brahminical customs and ceremonies remain.

The earliest religion of the Aryan race in India was a simple adoration of the great forces of nature. The sacred hymns, the Vedas, were addressed sometimes to Agni, the God of Fire, sometimes to Indra, the God of Rain, and yet again to Surya, the Sun God ; yet the religion was of a pantheistic rather than a polytheistic nature. There were no temples and no idols in Vedic times. Later came an elaborate ritual and the division of the people into castes, headed by the priestly caste of the Brahmins. Then arose the doctrine of transmigra-

tion and evolution from the lowest creatures to man, from man to the demigods and so to eventual absorption in the eternal, omnipresent Brahm.

Various systems of philosophy preceded Buddhism. The Vedantists believed that the universe was all illusion, but the Soul, they said, was in its essence a part of the Eternal Being, to whom, when it had acquired sufficient knowledge, it was again united. The Sankhya philosophers, on the contrary, did not recognise, though they did not absolutely deny, the Divine existence. Desire, they said, implies incompleteness and therefore imperfection. If then there was a perfect God he would not desire to create, and if there was a God who desired to create he must necessarily be imperfect, and therefore unable to do so. The end which was to be striven for was, as in Buddhism, emancipation from the necessity of further change—freedom from the wheel of things.

Buddhism recognised no caste, and for a time it prevailed in India, but about the sixth century A.D. it gave way before the modern Hindu cult, which, originating in the worship of Vishnu and Siva, rapidly degenerated into polytheism and gross idolatry. "This was apparently the religion of some of the original inhabitants of the country, with whom the effete remnant of the old Brahminical Aryans allied themselves to overthrow the Buddhists. In this they succeeded, but the unholy alliance gave birth to one of the most monstrous superstitions the world now knows but which generally prevails at the present day over the whole peninsula of India."¹ In the Hindu triad Brahma is

¹ Fergusson, *The Rock-Cut Temples of India*, introduction, p. xiv.

recognised as the creator, Vishnu as the preserver and Siva as the destroyer. The doctrine of the *avatars* or incarnations of a deity is very prominent, and the worship of Krishna, an *avatar* of Vishnu, is widespread.

Five hundred years before the Christian era, Sri T'hat T'ha¹ renounced his princely title, his wife, and child, and went forth to seek the Light. After some years of strict asceticism he was led to see that not by mortifying the body could the needs of the soul be satisfied. So he returned to the world, and the rest of his long life he spent as the great teacher, the Buddha.² And the sum of his teaching was that ignorance is the root of all evil, for out of ignorance comes desire, and through desire all the wrong-doing, all the unhappiness with which our lives are filled. The end, then, must be to eradicate ignorance. Our good actions will help us indeed, but they will help us only in that they enable us to rise to a higher state. As our nature becomes more perfect so will our understanding be made more clear and the way to knowledge will be opened to us. "Knowledge—not learning, but the sight of eternal truth, the perception of the unchanging laws of the universe."³

A criticism often brought against the Buddhist is that he is working only for his own good. To this he would reply that to those just entering the path, some reward, some prospect of advancement, must

¹ Sri T'hat T'ha, the Siamese equivalent of the Sanscrit *Sidharta*—"one who has attained his aim." Alabaster, *The Wheel of the Law*, p. 164.

² The Buddha (Siamese "Pra Puttha Chao"), from Sanscrit *Bodhi*—"transcendent intelligence."

³ James Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, p. 154.

be held out ; but never will they advance far if they keep this end always in view—"He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it." And the advancement which the Buddhist seeks is not of a material kind. He so conducts his life as to quench all worldly lust, and it may be that when very far upon the path he is reborn upon the earth in lowly guise. It is true that no spirit of universal brotherhood animates the Buddhist, but, as Alabaster says, selfishness which produces unselfishness cannot be severely condemned.¹

As means to the end the Buddha taught five rules of conduct which all must observe.

"Thou shalt not take any life at all."

"Thou shalt not obtain another's property by unjust means."

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

"Thou shalt not lie."

"Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquor."

He also founded the great brotherhood of the yellow robe who are bound by many additional vows.

The Buddha recognised that women, no less than men, were free to enter upon the path, and he permitted the foundation of an order of nuns. But the nuns are few in number. They enter the nunnery only as a refuge from the World, and so we may sometimes see them, old women bowed with trouble, with shaved heads, robed in white.

Buddhism rests not at all upon the miraculous. When the people go into a temple and kneel before the Buddha, they reverence him indeed, and repeat

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* preface, p. xx.

long formulæ in his praise, but never do they forget that he was once a man—*Pra Samana Kodom*¹—and that in time they may become even as he is. Pray to him they do, in time of trouble or sickness, but it is in opposition to his teaching. It is natural to man to pray, and they never look beyond their great teacher. But the Buddha cannot help them ; he did but point out the way, and everyone must work out his own salvation.

The Christian hopes that in some future life he may meet again those who were dear to him on earth, but not so the Buddhist. With death the personality of a man ceases for ever ; but the Buddha taught that just as our actions produce a chain of material results, whose end we cannot see, so do they leave behind a sum of merit and demerit—the *Kharma*—which goes to make up the next existence. The life of every Buddhist is tinged throughout with this doctrine of *Kharma*, about which so much has been written and concerning which so many complicated theories have been made, but to me it seems a simple enough belief.

The individual existence may be likened to a body of water, hurrying down a river. We see it first issuing from the ground in a spring, but we know that that is not the beginning, just as we know when we lose sight of it in the ocean that

¹ *Pra*—"the holy"—the title used in speaking of any Buddhist monk. The same word is used to denote an image of the Buddha or of a disciple, but so careful are the Siamese to avoid even the suspicion of idolatry, that in speaking of an image they often add the word *rup* (image or picture). *Samana*, a Buddhist monk, a corrupted form of the Sanscrit *Sramana*—"one who performs hard penance." *Kodom*, the Siamese equivalent of Gautama. Alabaster, *op. cit.* pp. 164, 203.

that is not the end. It fell from the clouds as rain, and to them, when it has lost its grosser nature, it will in the end return. Meanwhile it runs its course on earth: for an instant it exists as a waterfall, then as a deep, silent pool. We say that the pool and the waterfall are two distinct things—that they have nothing to do with one another—yet the water in the pool is the same that we looked at a moment ago in the waterfall. And the analogy may be carried further, for on the still surface of the pool are floating froth and bubbles, the effects of the tumult and confusion of the water in its previous existence as a waterfall. So do our acts produce results which continue down the ages, and according as they are good or bad our nature is ennobled or debased, and by so much they determine whether our next state of existence will be on a higher or a lower plane. Thus each man shapes his own destiny.

The illustration of the water must be given with some reservation, for Buddhist scholars say that all that survives is the *result* of our actions. According to this view the chain of existences finds a more exact parallel in the motion of a wave. The wave advances over the surface of the water but the water of which it is composed at any one point is left behind. This subtlety may be left for metaphysicians to argue over, for the ordinary Buddhist believes that though the personality becomes extinct, some principle, which we may call the soul, survives. Also many scholars say that Nirvanah, the goal for which the Buddhist aims, is extinction, but the Buddha did not teach this. He only refrained from defining in precise terms that which

we are unable to comprehend,¹ but it should be noticed that Nirvanah is a state of existence which, as in the case of the Buddha himself, it is possible to reach upon this earth. So also did he refrain from speaking of God. But when we have got rid of the idea of a personal God, a God subject to human passions, what is the all-pervading Divine Intelligence in which we believe? "It seems to me that this Divine Spirit is but the actual spirit of man, the disposition, be it good or evil—And God the Creator is the Holy Merit and Demerit, the cause and shaper of all existence."²

It is a common belief amongst Buddhists that every misfortune which we suffer is an atonement for sin committed in some previous life. But this would be both useless and unjust, for we should not know what it was that we were being punished for. The law of Kharma does not work so crudely. We are placed in a certain station, to which we have become fitted by the acts of our past lives, but in that station we have to suffer all the changes and chances of life. Before we can free ourselves from the wheel we must all be tried by misfortune. Perhaps some are getting more than their share in this life, but so much the greater is their present opportunity. This I believe to be the meaning of the Buddha's teaching.

To the ordinary Buddhist there are heavens for reward and hells for atonement. They are described in great detail and with wonderful imagery in the sacred books, but it must be remembered

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* Preface, p. lii.

² These are the words of an educated Siamese nobleman, Chao Phya Thipakon, translated under the title of "The Modern Buddhist." Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 71 *et seq.*

that these are the work of men who lived long after the Buddha. The Buddha himself taught only by word of mouth. And just as he refrained from speaking of a first cause and of the ultimate destiny of man, so also he said nothing of the beginning of the world or of its end. He indulged in no speculations as to the nature of the universe. But the disciples of the Buddha accepted and elaborated the Hindu cosmogony.

In the centre of the universe, they say, is Mount Meru, the dwelling-place of angels and demigods who are, however, still subject to the law of Kharma, and may even be born again upon our earth.¹ As we ascend the mountain the more blissful are the heavens through which we pass, and the more perfect are those who dwell therein, and at last we reach those highest seats of the blessed where no earthly passions remain, and from which it is but a short step to Nirvanah.

Surrounding Mount Meru are seven ranges of mountains, and beyond these is a stormy sea which no mortal can cross. The whole system is enclosed by the crystal walls of the world. In the sea are four great islands, of which three are the abodes of immortals who suffer no pain, but never can they escape from the fate which binds them to their present habitation. The southern island is our earth, a place of sorrow, but to us alone appear the Buddhas, the Great Beings who by their trans-

¹ These are the *Devas*, or in Siamese, *Taywadah*. One of the native names for Mount Everest is Devadhunga, the Heaven of Indra.



THE GREAT RENUNCIATION
FROM A FRESCO IN THE BAWT, WAT CHANG, BANGKOK

To face page 84



cent merit are about to pass into Nirvanah, but who, out of compassion for mankind, descend amongst us and teach the way by which we likewise may raise ourselves. Far beneath our earth are the hells, fearful places of torment, to which for a time the wicked are condemned, until by suffering their sin is purged away.

At incalculable periods of time a destroying element, whether fire, wind or water, overwhelms our earth and with it the hells, and reaching far up Mount Meru destroys also the lower, more sensual, heavens. Only the highest seats of the blessed are left. Then for a vast period chaos reigns, but at length the waters gather together; then a mighty wind divides the waters of the sea from the waters that are overhead, and finally the islands in the sea appear as before.

In each of the vast periods during which the world is in existence the stature of man waxes until he attains titanic proportions and then wanes, whilst the length of his life varies proportionately. We are now in a waning period. Our present world was peopled by three of those almost perfect beings from the highest seats which had escaped destruction. In course of time the spiritual light forsook them, and in answer to their prayers bright angels circled through the firmament around Mount Meru, and shed their light upon the earth: we call these angels the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. Then as a result of their new environment these beings began to feel a desire for food, and rice appeared to satisfy their needs. By eating they became more gross, difference of sex arose and marriage was instituted amongst them. From that time the rice

no longer appeared, and they were obliged to work. From the desire of each to possess the fruits of his own labour arose the idea of personal property. Then came theft, and from this sprang a multitude of evils—"abuse, reviling, assault, falsehood and then punishments."¹ Law and justice followed, and as the fountain of justice a King was appointed, and a tenth of each man's rice was set aside for his service. Still crime continued to increase, and sad at heart many abandoned all their possessions and begged their food from place to place. In this way originated the caste of the Brahmins.

Of the countless hosts of Buddhas who have appeared since the beginning of time, four have come to our present earth. Two thousand five hundred years hence the teaching of the last Buddha, Pra Samana Kodom, will be forgotten, and then another Buddha will appear upon the earth. When his cycle too has expired, the universe will once more be destroyed and recreated.

It is unnecessary to say that most educated Siamese do not now accept this explanation of the universe. The great King Narai took an intelligent interest in astronomy, and King Mongkut was an accomplished mathematician, able to work out the time of an eclipse. Yet in the Bangkok Debating Society young Siamese of the better class still gravely discuss whether the world is flat or round, and although there are many amongst them who have been to Europe they have not succeeded in convincing the majority of their fellow

¹ J. G. Scott (Shway Yoe), *The Burman, his Life and Notions*, vol. i. p. 113 (1882).

members, and "flat" is the recorded verdict of the Society.

But underlying their crude beliefs is a great conception which a truer knowledge of the universe would in nowise shake, for the Buddhist believes that his fate is determined by laws of perfect justice : unalterable, inexorable laws. We think to sway the Divine Will by our prayers, but to the Buddhist the laws of righteousness are as immutable as Newton's, and come, like his, from beyond our ken.¹ As we sow so shall we reap, and we shall reap in exact proportion to our sowing.

The Christian missionaries teach that if only a man has Faith he will be sure of heaven, but if after the word has been preached to him he believes not, then will he be cast into outer darkness ; but the Buddhist cannot understand this. The goal for which he is striving is within the reach of all, irrespective of creed, and it matters not by what path we reach it. Nay, he does not even assert that the whole truth has been revealed to him ; he is but a seeker after the light.²

His attitude towards warring sects is exemplified in an ancient parable, familiar to Buddhists from Ceylon to Japan. A company of blind men were once walking along a road when it chanced that they met an elephant. Each felt the animal, and then they fell to discussing what it was that they had met. One had felt only a tusk and he said it

¹ Fielding Hall, *The Soul of a People*, p. 21 (1902).

² "The Modern Buddhist," speaking of the perplexity into which his countrymen were thrown by the teachings of Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries, said, "It is one religion, yet how can we join it when each party threatens us with hell if we agree with the other, and there is none to decide between them?" Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 33.

was something round and smooth ; another had felt the ear and he said that it was large and flat ; a third had felt a leg and he declared that it was like the trunk of a tree, while a fourth who had felt the tail said that it was a rope. Soon they began to quarrel over it and then from words they proceeded to blows, but a certain sage who had witnessed the occurrence stopped them and said, " Had you but pieced together the facts which each perceived, you would amongst you have arrived at the truth."

An even greater stumbling-block to the Siamese who is asked to accept Christianity is that he believes that he is asked to choose between an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. Speaking of this a monk once said to me, " Suppose there were two men, one of whom had made just enough merit to escape from hell while the other fell short by only a little of the required standard. Would the former for his by no means conspicuously good life be rewarded throughout eternity with all the joys of paradise while the other, only a shade less good, suffered the everlasting torments of the damned ?" ¹

The theory of eternal punishment is entirely opposed to that spirit of endless compassion which is of the essence of Buddhism, and from such an idea their reason revolts. In the end we all shall reach the " Great Deliverance." Yet no death-bed repentance will save the sinner from his just measure

¹ " The Modern Buddhist" has expressed the same idea in more beautiful language—" How is it possible that those who have not cleared away the evil disposition from their soul should attain the most excellent heaven, and live eternally with God the Creator? and of those who are to remain in hell for ever, many have made merit and have done much good. Shall that be altogether lost?" Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 42.

of atonement, for salvation comes not in a moment. By slow degrees and through many a weary sojourn will the soul at length be cleansed of desire, and enter into that Peace which passeth all understanding.



BRONZE HEAD OF BUDDHA

CHAPTER IV

TEMPLES, IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

“Only great Brahm endures : the Gods but live.”

The Light of Asia.

A BUDDHIST temple is not a house of prayer. It is a place to which men may come in order that, by steadfastly setting before their minds their ideal of all that a man may be, they may attune their thoughts to the Buddha's teachings. “It is bootless to worship the Buddha ; nothing is necessary but to revere him and the memory of him. Statues are only useful in so far as they refresh the memory ; for as the farmer sows the seed and gathers in the grain in due season, so will the man who trusts in the Buddha and holds fast by his sacred Law obtain the deliverance and pass into Nehban.”¹

Their reverence finds expression in words of praise, and in such simple acts of worship as the laying of a flower at the Buddha's feet. The Buddha's view of life they keep ever in their thoughts by the repetition of certain formulæ : “All is changeful ; all is sorrow ; all is illusion.” And this belief in the impermanence of things has profoundly influenced their buildings. “Where is the use of laboriously carving figures in the hardest stone when the most indestructible of them could

¹ Translation from the Yatana Kalapa—Scott, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 221.

only last for a time which is but as a ripple in the stream of eternity?"¹ But in the heart of the people there is no change: the Buddhist knows that his temples will soon crumble away, but he knows, too, that his children will raise up others in their stead.

And so Bangkok is a veritable city of temples. Here and there as we row along the river or through the small canals we pass a little covered landing-stage, with steps leading down into the water. Let us stop at one of them, it matters little which. On the bank a wide space is swept smooth and planted with trees, amongst which are little rest-houses (*salas*)—very simple—just a floor raised a few feet off the ground and a gabled roof, with open sides. Here the market-woman puts down her basket and sits awhile, chatting to the passers-by. Some way back from the river is the white outer wall of the temple, and before the gateway stand monstrous demoniacal figures, or lions, carved by cunning Chinese artificers.²

Passing through the gate we find ourselves within a low colonnade which surrounds a spacious court. On either hand stretches in long perspective a row of gilded images, seated with crossed legs, life size and all alike. They represent the eighty chief disciples of the Buddha, but often they greatly exceed this number. In the centre of the court stands a lofty building whose whitewashed walls are pierced low down by a row of square-cut windows, half concealed behind the square white pillars of a peristyle; but

¹ *Op. cit.* vol. i. p. 228.

² Lions were employed as the guardians of the gate as long ago as the second century A.D. by the sculptors at Amaravati, and these very lions may now be seen on the great staircase of the British Museum.

the great glory of the building is its tiled roof, rising high above, and glowing with all the gorgeous colours that the East can bestow.

In a single temple there are often many such buildings, but one of them, the *bawt*, is more holy than all the rest, and in it alone can a man take the vows and become a monk. The other buildings are the *wihans* or image-houses. The *bawt* is distinguished by eight stones called the *bai sema*, set around it at the four cardinal and the four intermediate points. They are cut into the shape of the leaves of the sacred Bo tree, and underneath are buried round stones and small silver coins sprinkled with lustral water. By this means all evil influences are to be kept without the sacred precincts, and the sprinkling of the water has special significance, for by it the ground is consecrated for ever to the use of the monks. It was a very ancient Brahminical custom, when giving a piece of land, to sprinkle the place with water in confirmation of the grant. Old Indian sculptures show that the water was poured from a conch shell or from a vessel with a long spout, something like a tea-pot. A gold tea-pot forms part of the insignia which the King of Siam gives to high Government officials, and Alabaster suggests that the significance of this gift was originally connected with the custom of pouring water on the ground.¹

When the Buddha was being tempted by the evil angel P'hya Man (Mara), he called upon the Earth to give testimony to his great acts, since there was no man who could bear him witness, and in his appeal he reminded the Earth that whenever he

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 224.



THE BAWT, WAT SUTAT, BANGKOK

had performed a great act he had not failed to pour water upon her. Thereupon the angel of the Earth sprang from the ground in the form of a lovely woman, and admitting the truth of his words she wrung her long hair, and a flood of waters gushed forth from it which utterly swept away the host of P'hya Man.¹ The Siamese call the Angel of the Earth "Pra Torani," and regard her as the great mother of all mankind.

The numerous courts of the temple open one out of another, with little regularity of plan. In some are the rows of small buildings where the monks dwell, each in his own room. Others are filled with leafy trees and artificial rocks and ponds; again in others stand the bell-shaped *pra chedis* surmounted by slender spires, or the blunter columns, raised on terraced stages, known as *pra prangs*. A *pra chedi* or a *pra prang* is often the most important architectural feature of the whole temple, and sometimes the courts and buildings are grouped symmetrically about it.

In all this there is little of real architectural merit. In the north the pillars of the temples are often great posts of teak, set out of the perpendicular so as to incline inward at the top, but in southern Siam they are almost invariably built of brick. The arch is never employed; doors and windows are simply rectilinear openings narrowing towards the top, and the lintels are beams of wood. The pediments are sometimes finely decorated with carving in teak, very deeply cut, the rich tones of the wood harmonising with a background of dark blue, but more often the designs are moulded in plaster. The

¹ *Ibid.* p. 155.

pra chedis and *pra prangs* seem from a distance to be carved in stone, sparkling with mosaics which flash back a hundred colours in the sunlight, and wrought into their fabrics are the forms of giants and goblins; but in reality they are all brick and plaster, too, and the mosaics are bits of broken china stuck into the plaster with little skill. Everything is perishable and much is tawdry, yet about it all, as we wander through the cool cloisters, past the rows of placid figures, there is a feeling of wonderful aloofness from the turmoil which we have left outside.

And still greater is the peace and quiet when we enter the darkened *bawt*. On either side we see ranks of pillars rising till they are lost in the shadows of the roof, and at one end the seated figure of the Buddha sheds his ineffable calm abroad. Sometimes he sits alone, but more often the seated figure is at the apex of a pyramid whose lower steps are crowded with images, some seated and holding fans before them, some standing, with raised hands as if in act to bless. On the lowest step are many offerings of an incongruous nature: cheap clocks, and ornaments of atrocious European design. The *wihans* are very similar, but sometimes a single colossal image occupies the whole of the building, and always the interior is dimly lit, for most of the windows are closely shuttered and the fresco-covered walls reflect but little light.

In the temples the Buddha is represented in many different attitudes. The commonest shows him seated with crossed legs, as when under the Bo tree he first saw the Light; more rarely he is sitting in European fashion upon a throne. Sometimes

he is represented walking through the land and staying all strife with one hand stretched palm outward before him, and sometimes he is reclining upon his side, as he lay upon his death-bed. Of this last type is the so-called "Sleeping Buddha" in Bangkok; a mighty figure one hundred and twenty feet in length.

The Buddha may always be recognised by the glory, the *sirot*, upon his head. Amongst the marks which the popular superstition insisted upon as characteristic of a Great Being, and which were, therefore, pre-eminently marks of the Buddha, was a curiously pointed cranium covered with refulgent hair. From this the Siamese derived their idea of the glory, which does not encircle the head like a halo, but rises flame-like above it. Sometimes the *sirot* is clearly intended to represent a flame and nothing else, but generally it is conventionalised into the form of an arrow head, and this by shortening is easily transformed into the shape of a lotus bud.

From the *sirot* the Siamese derived their idea of a crown, which is therefore with them a pyramidal structure whose essential part is not the circlet round the head, but the point above it.¹ The crown consists of decreasing circlets surrounded by up-standing spikes, and it bears a curious resemblance to the mitre which was worn by the richer classes in ancient Chaldæa, four thousand years ago.² Though the crown was derived from the *sirot* we very often see images of the Buddha in which the *sirot* has been replaced by a crown. If we compare

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 207.

² Rawlinson, *Five Ancient Monarchies*, vol. i. p. 133, illustration.

the crown worn by the seated Buddha shown on the opposite page with the illustration facing page 286, we shall see that it is not unlike a tower of the Nakawn Wat. In both cases it has been suggested that the circlets represent the ascending tiers of the heavens upon Mount Meru.

The remainder of the Buddha's head is covered with small knobs which represent his hair. When Prince Sri T'hat T'ha left his palace "he reflected that his long hair did not become the character of a poor ascetic," and so as no one was worthy to touch his head he cut the hair off with his own sword, praying, "May my hair thus cut be neat and even, and by the force of his prayer the hair parted evenly, leaving each hair about an inch and a half in length, and they curled in right-handed spirals, and never grew more to the last day of his life."¹ In a well-made image each separate spiral is clearly indicated.

Amongst the other signs of a Great Being is a network of lines covering the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet; this is sometimes found on images. Often the hands, or feet, or both, are marked with a disc, the sign *Chakka*, an emblem of great antiquity. In the oldest sculptures the *Chakka* is in the form of a chariot wheel.² We can well understand how, in primitive times, the possessor of a chariot adopted the wheel as a symbol of his superiority over his enemies; a wheel

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 130. The head is considered peculiarly sacred in Eastern countries. Thus the Brahmins considered that they sprang from the head of Brahma while the lower castes sprang from less honourable portions of his body. In Siam it is considered a mark of great disrespect to touch a person's head.

² *Ibid.* p. 287.



BRONZE IMAGES
FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

under the foot would convey the idea of fleetness, which has always been considered an attribute of greatness. Later the wheel developed into a radiant weapon, the discus of Indra, which destroyed those against whom it was hurled. As adopted by the Buddhists it is "the Wheel of Law" which utterly exterminates the evil disposition of all beings. The wheel is also typical of that endless chain of existences from which there is no escape but in Nirvanah. "To turn the Wheel of the Law" is a mystic expression which may refer to the practical illustration of a wheel, a thing perfect in itself without beginning or end, and therefore emblematic of eternity. From this idea, perhaps, arose the prayer wheels of the Tibetans.

The circular Celtic crosses which are preserved in many English churches are often indistinguishable from the *Chakka*. It seems that the wheel emblem was first faithfully copied, but with only eight spokes. Then it was seen that these eight spokes outlined the arms of a cross. To make this more apparent the alternate sectors were sometimes removed, but the rim of the wheel was always allowed to remain.

In representations of the footprint of the Buddha, which are often found in the temples, there are one hundred and eight other signs surrounding the *Chakka*. Amongst these are the insignia of Royalty: the seven or nine-tiered white umbrella, the sword, the fan, the golden slippers and the jewelled crown. Here also is the cow, a symbol of Gautama, and the Naga (hooded serpent), hen and crocodile, symbols of the Buddhas who preceded him upon our earth, as well as the tiger,

symbol of him who shall come hereafter. Here is the huge fish who swims in the waters beneath the earth, giving rise to earthquakes, and here too are some of those precious things recovered from the ocean when it was churned in the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu. Alabaster believes that this great elaboration of signs was due to Siamese fancy, and formed no part of the older Ceylonese superstition of the footprint.

One peculiarity which is never absent in a Siamese image of the Buddha, is the length of the ears, but I do not think that this was specially characteristic of a Grand Being. It was a general custom of great antiquity amongst the aboriginal inhabitants of the land to pierce the lobes of the ears and put cylinders in them, so that they often nearly touched the shoulders. This custom seems to have been handed on to the Cambodians. There is scarce one out of the thousands of figures portrayed in the carvings at the Nakawn Wat that has not got these immensely elongated lobes, and, generally, an elaborate form of ear-ring. In Siam the custom of wearing ear-rings is not now more common than it is with us.

I have already said that the strict Buddhist does not believe in prayer, yet he will not altogether forego it, and as he kneels before the image of the Buddha he often asks that what he desires may come to pass. His prayer is not directly addressed to the Buddha, and it is rather by the force of his own inherent merit that he expects his prayer to be answered, as in the story quoted above, when Sri T'hat T'ha cut off his locks.

In those temples which are chiefly frequented by



SINGTO—A LION



A CHAKKA



the Chinese are to be found the most imposing images, and in them the note of idolatry is unmistakable. All day long these temples are thronged with worshippers, whilst, except on the Buddhist holy days, the temples of the Siamese are empty. The simple reverential raising of joined hands with which the Siamese enter their own temples is here replaced by the most abject prostrations, and clouds of incense roll up to the dim roof. Here can no one come for quiet and meditation. In one corner is a man beating a drum, to attract the attention of any wandering spirits who may be disposed to show favour to one meritoriously engaged. Elsewhere is a stall at which gold leaf may be purchased, to stick upon such parts of the image as are within reach. A constant rattle proceeds from those who are shaking strips of stick out of a dice-box. The strips are numbered and a corresponding paper will tell them whether or not they are likely to prosper in whatever enterprise they have come to inquire about. Yet first they will make trial of the oracle by taking two pieces of wood, flat upon one side and rounded on the other. These they throw into the air saying, "If this numbered stick will give me a true answer may both these pieces of wood come down with their rounded sides uppermost." This they repeat in many ways before they feel confident that the gods are not making sport of them. When at length they are satisfied they get their printed answer, which we may be sure is not too definite. With it they buy a gilded paper and some crackers, which they burn in a stone or iron cauldron at the door of the temple, and this, the thrifty Chinaman says, answers just as well as

though he had offered a great sum of money. The majority of those who thus seek to inquire into the future are about to buy a ticket in the lottery.

Just as in Roman Catholic churches there are images of saints, so in Siam we find images of many holy men, and a few of women, whom they reverence for their good lives only in less degree than they reverence the Buddha. Chief amongst these are Pra Mokhalan and Pra Sariput, the two principal disciples, who often stand one on either side of the Buddha, with joined hands, Pra Mokhalan being on the left, the more honourable station. This disciple was murdered by a robber, but the Siamese will not have it that he was killed, for though his bones were all broken into small pieces they miraculously joined together again.

And just as Roman Catholics believe in patron saints, so do the Siamese think that these holy men will act as intercessors for them with some higher power. Therefore if they break a limb they invoke the healing power of Pra Mokhalan.

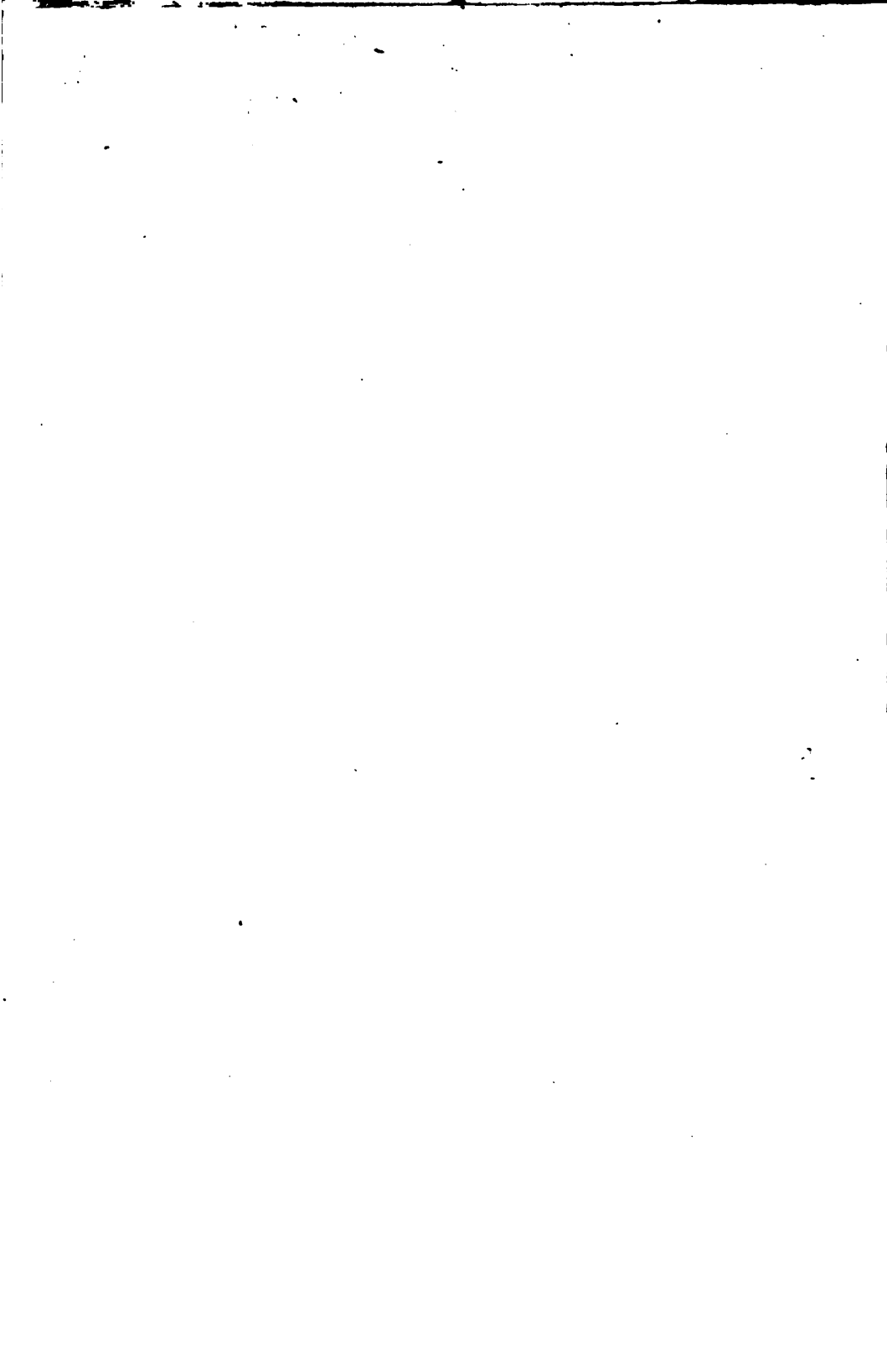
The images of Pra Mokhalan and Pra Sariput have no *sirot*, and their heads are represented shaven. The images of the disciples surrounding the courts, however, all have the *sirot* and can in nowise be distinguished from images of the Buddha.

Sometimes in the temples we may see an image with emaciated figure and shaved head. This represents Pra Samana Kodom (Gautama) when he was a hermit in the jungle, wasted with hunger. He has no *sirot*, for he was not yet the Buddha. But some images of the Buddha seated in European fashion are also called "The Buddha in the jungle." One hand lies palm upward on his lap to receive



IMAGES OF DISCIPLES

To face page 100



the gifts of the pious, and he is accompanied by small figures representing an elephant and a monkey, kneeling on the ground at his feet, and uplifting offerings towards him.

Generally sitting in a little *wihan* all by himself is the enormously fat Pra Sangkachai, cradling his burdensome belly in clasped hands. Endless are the stories told of this jolly saint. He was once tall and beautiful like the other disciples, but in his pride he spoke vaingloriously to one of them. Thereupon that disciple laid his hand upon the head of Pra Sangkachai, who immediately became squat and fat, and so ever after he remained. One day he was bathing, when a man passing by upon the river bank jeeringly remarked that he would like to have a wife as plump as that. For this disrespect the man was himself turned into a woman.

Pra Sangkachai is he whom the farmers supplicate for rain, and in the Bangkok museum there is a rare image of this saint stretching forth one hand and calling down the rain. But the women pray to Pra Sangkachai that they may not be childless.

Elsewhere we may come upon a figure seated in the attitude of contemplation¹ and wearing a curious head-dress. This is one of the *Reussi*, a *Yogi* or hermit, to whom by virtue of his extreme asceticism the gates of knowledge have been opened. The head-dress represents his untended hair, and its curious form is perhaps a reminiscence of a former fashion of the Siamese, who at one time cut their hair into a sort of inverted brush. Long ago it was the custom for the sons of great nobles to be sent to learn from a *Reussi*.

¹ Like the seated Buddha in the illustration facing p. 96.

Less often we may see the sinister figure of Pra Yama, standing between his two assistants. He it is who passes judgment upon men after death, and allots to each his measure of punishment in hell. He is a being of perfect justice, but to inspire the popular mind with awe he is represented with repellent countenance. Pra Yama was taken from Vedic mythology, in which he was regarded as the first mortal who died, and he corresponds to the Greek Pluto.

The Miltonic conception of Satan is closely paralleled by the angel P'hya Man, who descended to our earth to become the tempter of Pra Samana Kodom before he had attained to Buddhahood. He could take many forms, and he is sometimes portrayed in the frescoes.

In the museum there is a curious set of bronze images of angels, riding each on a different animal: a horse, a stag, a dragon, and so on. They represent the Sun, the Moon and the planets, after which the days of the week are named, and it is a very remarkable thing that the Siamese days are called by the names of the same celestial bodies as our own. Thus Pra Atit is the Angel of the Sun, and their *Wan Atit* is our Sunday; *Wan Chan*, the day of the Moon, is our Monday; *Wan Angkan*, the day of Mars (Anglo-Saxon *Tiw*), is our Tuesday; *Wan Put*, the day of Mercury (A.S. *Woden*), is our Wednesday; *Wan Prahat*, the day of Jupiter (A.S. *Thor*), is our Thursday; *Wan Suk*, the day of Venus (A.S. *Frige*), is our Friday; and *Wan Sao*, the day of Saturn, is our Saturday. We see here how a system invented by the ancient Chaldæans has spread to countries as far apart as England and Siam.

In addition to these seven angels there are two other brothers, Pra Ket (Ketu) a benignant deity who is propitiated during the hair-cutting ceremony, and the eldest, the terrible Pra Rahoo. Sometimes all these angels meet in the sky, and then Pra Rahoo tries to swallow his brothers, causing an eclipse of the sun if it be by day, and of the moon by night. Then all the people fire off guns and beat gongs and rattle tins together, that by this dreadful noise they may scare Pra Rahoo away. Wise Brahmin astrologers tell them when they must be on the look-out, and so far their efforts have always been in time to save the luminaries from destruction. A similar form of this superstition occurs amongst primitive people in all parts of the world.

Amongst the carvings we come across many figures in attitudes of adoration, and these too are angels. Nor are the old gods of India forgotten, though their images never occupy an important place in the temples. But though Brahminism survives it has long since been reconciled with Buddhism, for all the Brahmin gods, they say, are angels, dwelling in one of the heavens upon Mount Meru. Lord of all the lower angels is Pra In (Indra), and to him especially the people pray, for he exercises a great influence over the affairs of men. The frescoes in the temples are generally scenes from the life of the Buddha, and everywhere Pra In appears, now making offerings to the Buddha and now leading the countless multitudes of angels down to earth that they may share in the benefit of his teachings.

But an almost equally favourite subject is the great Hindu epic, the Ramakien (Ramayana) which

tells how Pra Rama, the great hero, or demigod in his character as an *avatar* of Vishnu, assisted by the monkeys under Hanuman, made war against the giants of Ceylon and their demon king, Ravana, who had carried off his wife.

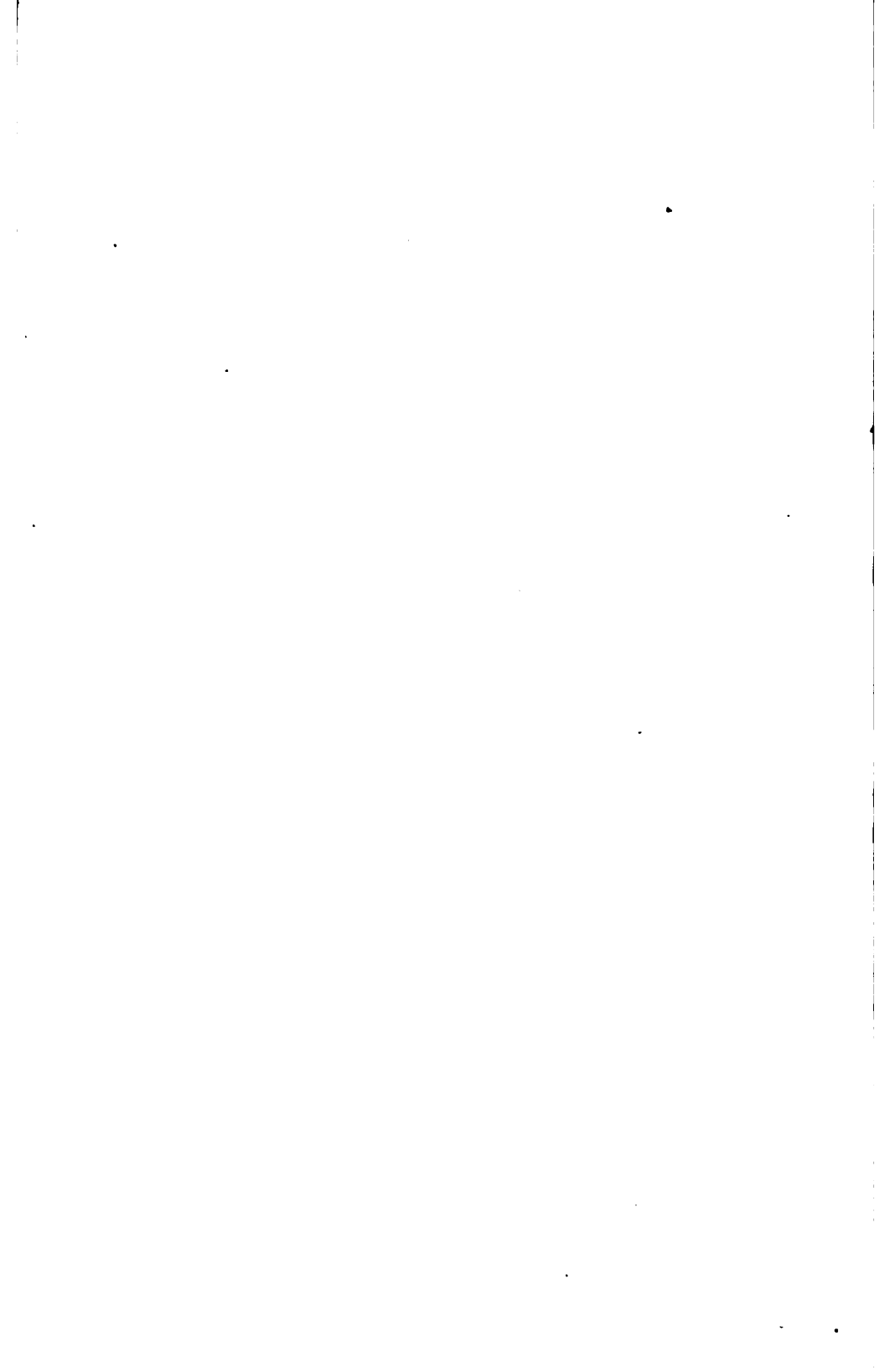
Conspicuous in the plaster decoration of the *pra prangs* we may often see Pra Narai (Vishnu), riding on his three-headed elephant, and a very common feature of the decoration of the pediment is a winged creature, P'hya Krut (Garuda), upon whose back Pra Narai was wont to ride through the air.

In the museum in Bangkok there stands a fine life-size bronze statue of Vishnu. It came from the north, from near Pitsunalok where it stood in the jungle, and there the simple villagers used to come and garland it with flowers, and place lighted candles on the ground before it. But one day a European traveller passed that way, and being unable to bear away the complete figure he knocked off its head, and took that. In great trouble the villagers went to the local authorities, who wrote to Bangkok, where the head was recovered; but the Government seeing that they had got the head then sent for the body also, and having repaired it set it in the museum; so the villagers lost their god after all.

Pra Isuen (Siva) is generally represented with four arms, but sometimes he has as many as ten. He rides upon a humped Brahmin bull, and a small Buddha is often shown upon his head. The Buddha, they say, and Pra Isuen made trial which could hide from the other, but everywhere that the one hid the other was able to see him, till at length the Buddha sat upon Pra Isuen's head. Of this Pra Isuen was not aware, and so the Buddha gained the victory.



THE GREAT PRA PRANG, WAT CHANG, BANGKOK



Far higher than the sensual heaven of Indra are the heavens of the Brahmas, the meditative angels. Their heavens are higher even than the Tushita heaven in which a Bodhisat, a being about to become a Buddha, spends his last angelic existence before being born upon earth to assume the Buddhahood. The Bodhisats are filled with compassion for mankind and they voluntarily renounce the higher heaven that they may be reborn the sooner upon earth, for the span of existence allotted to the Brahmas is vast beyond imagination.¹ To the condition of a Brahma man may raise himself by his own unaided efforts, but to reach Nirvanah, to escape for ever from the course of transmigration, it is necessary, the monks say, that he should happen to be born upon the earth at the same time as a Buddha, and hear his teaching. If I have made myself clear in the last chapter it is unnecessary to repeat here that Gautama claimed no such special virtue for his words. Alabaster believes that the leaders of Buddhism, recognising the high character of many who did not agree with them, were sufficiently tolerant to admit that they might attain a very high position in the scale of existence, yet like the leaders of all other religions they would acknowledge no way to the perfect Peace save that propounded by their own teacher.

I have dwelt at some length upon the subject of the lower divinities or angels, for to many it is a source of great perplexity to see, in the frescoes, the Buddha surrounded by the figures of Brahmin gods. In the frescoes the Buddha is invariably robed in red, with face and hands of gold. Indra is always

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 177.

green, and the Brahmas are represented with four faces.

Thus the pages of Siamese mythology are crowded with a host of figures, for to the legion of Buddhist saints is added the whole pantheon of the Hindus. Then, too, there are the countless denizens of Himap'han, the Buddhist fairyland. There are the Kinarés, half human and half bird. There also is the wonderful tree on which beautiful young girls grow, and wither away in seven days. Even the goblins and devils of Taoism are allowed a place in the decoration of the temples.

And side by side with this great company we find emblems taken from sources so old that it is hard to say whence they come. Look up at the roof of the *bawt*, to where the ends of the ridge curve up into graceful horns. This is a relic of snake-worship, for the horns are meant for Nagas' heads. The serpent is a symbol of many things: of wisdom, of healing, of power over wind and rain; and most intimately connected with serpents is the idea of life. An old Mexican legend identifies the Sun God, the father of the human race, with a serpent.¹ The sun and the serpent both typify "the invigorating power of nature—the life transmitted from generation to generation."² According to Fergusson, Buddhism was chiefly influential amongst snake-worshipping tribes, but its supporters repressed the worship of the serpent and elevated tree-worship in its place.³ At the Nakawn Wat the serpent symbol

¹ The "Serpent Symbol in America," by E. G. Squier, published in *American Archaeological Researches*, No. 1, p. 161.

² "Snake Symbol in India," by J. H. Rivett-Carnac, reprinted from the *Journal of As. Soc. Bengal*, 1879, p. 13.

³ Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 62.

is so predominant that Fergusson believed that temple to have been built for snake-worship, but in the carvings of the Buddhist *stūpa* at Amaravati¹ it occurs with almost equal frequency, and it is also seen on the rail of the Sanchi Tope.

The superior Nagas were regarded as very powerful beings, generally working for good, though sometimes they poisoned the air with their breath, thus causing a pestilence. The lesser Nagas were liable to be pounced upon and carried off by the great winged P'hya Krut.

In the "Birth stories," which relate the previous existences upon earth of him who became the Buddha, one tells how he was born as a Naga King. He was wont to come by night and lie in the shade of a tree on the banks of the river, but at sunrise he changed into the form of an angel, and all the female Nagas took the likeness of human beings. Now P'hya Krut was desirous of bearing off the Naga King, so he went to one of the *Reussi* to learn how he might accomplish his object. Then when the *Reussi* had given him advice he procured a snake charmer, but neither could the charmer prevail against the Naga King nor could the latter prevail against the charmer, so they slew each other continually and as often returned to life again.²

In the story of the Buddha's life the seven-headed Naga appears spreading his hood over the Teacher's head, to shield him from a great storm.

Not only do Nagas form the terminals of the roof ridge but they also appear at the extremities of the

¹ Now in the British Museum.

² This version is taken from the inscription beneath a fresco in Wat Chang, Bangkok.

eaves. Here they have a more flame-like appearance, but we have only to look at their bodies, writhing up the gable ends, to have no doubt as to their meaning. A comparison of the illustration on the opposite page with that of the central tower at the Nakawn Wat, facing page 298, will show how little modification the snake symbol has undergone in this particular position.

The doorways and windows are generally surmounted by a tapering canopy of carved wood or plaster decoration. At the apex of the canopy a Naga's head, of the same character as the roof terminal, often projects from the wall. This feature is shown in the illustration of the door at Wat Sutat, facing page 148, but as the camera was placed exactly opposite the door, the horn-like shape of the projection is not apparent. There are, however, two additional fivefold Nagas in this doorway, at the two lower angles of the triangular canopy above the lintel.

In many temple buildings wooden brackets spring from below the capitals of the pillars to the eaves, and these are also carved to represent Nagas.

So prevalent is this symbol that in the exterior decoration of a single temple building, such as the *bawt* of Wat Pra Keo, it occurs more than one hundred times. The reader may attempt to count for himself the number of the Nagas that adorn the roof of the shrine at Prabat, shown in the illustration facing page 248.

Few things are more curious to note than the recurrence of an exactly similar form of serpent symbol in Norway. Some old Norwegian churches are built with their roofs in many tiers, resembling



THE TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDAH
WAT PRA KEO, BANGKOK

To face page 108

the Siamese, and the roof ridge is finished off with Nagas' heads, of the same general type as the Siamese but more easily recognisable, owing to their greater elaboration.

Of tree-worship there are abundant reminiscences in Siam. Whenever we see on the bank of the river a grove of trees, larger and finer than the rest, we may be sure that amongst them there is hidden a temple. The very name for a temple—*wat*—is probably derived from the Sanscrit *vata*, a grove.¹ The robes of dying monks are hung, as offerings, upon the Bo-trees growing in the courts. The Bo-tree is revered by Buddhists because it was while sitting beneath its protecting shade that the Buddha became omniscient, and the Buddha himself showed his gratitude by standing with unclosed eyes for seven days, as an offering to the tree.² But from the very dawn of history trees, have been held in reverence. Men of all nations have considered it a sacred duty to plant trees, and "the grove was man's first temple."³ Whilst snake-worship was typical of the male or generative power of nature, the grove symbolised the female principle, but it was with the fruit alone that this idea was first connected. The palm-tree, like the snake, typified the male creator. The banyan, the Bo-tree of the Buddhists, in itself represents the dual idea, the stately trunk answering to the Tree of Life, whilst the fruit is emblematic of the female.⁴ The banyan or some other member

¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 282. The term *wat* includes the temple and the monks' dwelling-houses.

² *Ibid.* p. 161.

³ C. Staniland Wake, *Serpent-Worship*, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 23.

of the *Ficus* tribe is viewed with veneration throughout Africa and New Zealand, and by the aborigines of northern Australia.¹ In India the Bo-tree was often seen encircling a palm, and in this the Buddhists saw a conjunction of the male and female elements, symbolic of a perfect being complete in himself, and in a higher sense of perfect wisdom.

For a similar reason the lotus is an emblem of the Buddha. Another, and more poetic idea, is contained in the lotus symbol. It grows with its roots deep down in the black mud; the stem rises up through the water, emblematic of eternity, and it comes to perfect fruition in the pure air above. The lotus form is employed in the capitals of columns, and everywhere it is prominent in the decorative designs. Very often the Buddha is portrayed standing upon a lotus; but the lotus was venerated in Egypt ages before Gautama lived.

The *pra chedis* represent another set of ideas—ancestor-worship—for the *pra chedi* can be traced back to the tumulus. When the Buddha lay upon his death-bed he directed his disciples to collect his bones after cremation, and to bury them under a mound like a heap of rice. Hence the mounds or *stūpas* in India were originally intended to cover relics of the Buddha or of some saint, and as such they were venerated by Buddhists. Later they were used to mark sacred spots, and finally they were raised without any special object but merely as a votive offering. They are very common in Siam, and by a misuse they are often placed over the bones of men by their relatives.

The earliest *stūpas* in India were hemispherical.

¹ C. Staniland Wake, *op. cit.* p. 16 *et seq.*

Afterwards the hemisphere was raised upon a cylinder which gave to the *stūpa* more the appearance of a tower. The hemispherical dome supported a square block, which represented the box in which the relic was placed, and above this came a finial, built in the form of an umbrella, with three, seven, or nine stories. Later on this finial became much more important, and assumed the proportions of a spire.

In Siam the earliest *pra chedis* were built in the neighbourhood of Sawankalok. They were bell-shaped, of no great height compared with their diameter, and stood on square bases. They are now as a rule given more slender proportions and the base is omitted. The bell-shaped dome is surmounted by a spire, moulded into rings which clearly represent the tiers of the old umbrella-shaped finial, though their number has been greatly increased.

Sometimes the cross section of the dome is square, but with re-entrant angles.¹ As a rule only small examples of this type are found, and the larger *pra chedis* are free from any elaboration. The dome swells in an unbroken curve, and a great pagoda, such as that at Prapratom, possesses a dignity and power that is altogether lacking in the polygonal forms of Burmah.

The *pra chedi* shown on the next page is a modern example, of typical proportions. The base on which it stands is an imitation of European architecture, associated with a number of carved figures borrowed from the Chinese. I included this

¹ The *pra chedis* shown in the illustration facing page 248 are of this type.

illustration in my book to show the corrupt and degraded nature of modern Siamese architecture.

The form known as *pra prang* was derived from the old Brahmin shrines which were raised upon pyramidal structures. The relics or bones which they contain are therefore enclosed at the summit of the pyramidal structure, and at the base of the column which it supports. The lofty proportions given to the column may be connected with the *phallic* idea.

The Sanchi Tope is surrounded by a circle of upright stones, connected by three cross bars. It is probable that similar circles were at first made of wood, and when, later on, they were built of stone, the old forms were adhered to. In Cambodia, certain pagodas, constructed on the ruins of ancient sanctuaries, are even now surrounded with fences made of wood, and these may be accurate reproductions of the old circles which they have replaced. The gateways of these enclosures differ from those at Sanchi in having only two cross bars. They are, in fact, almost identical in form with the Shinto gates (*toriis*) of Japan.

The great *pra prang* at Sawankalok, built in the eleventh century A.D., was, I believe, surrounded by a ring of monoliths surmounted by a simple architrave, resembling the outer circle at Stonehenge. I had no opportunity of visiting Sawankalok and although photographs show that there are some monoliths which still remain upright, it is possible that these belonged only to gateways. In some modern Siamese temples the ancient enclosures are represented by a number of small *pra chedis* built around the base of a great *pra chedi*,



A PRA PRANG
WAT PICHAYAT, BANGKOK



A PRA CHEDI
WAT PICHAYAT, BANGKOK

and sometimes a circular court surrounds the *prachedi*. Perhaps we may regard all the courts of the temple as derived in this way. In the old Cambodian temples the enclosures at an early date were rectangular in shape, and took the form already described in the introduction.

Tall wooden masts may often be seen standing in the temple grounds. Upon the top of the mast a bird is carved, and this probably represents Hanasa, upon whom Brahma rides through the air. Hanasa is the same as the swan, the bird of eternity, which carries on the life principle from one epoch of the world's creation to the next.¹

Underlying serpent, tree and ancestor worship, are *phallic* ideas, and *phallic* worship itself is not dead in Siam. This is probably the oldest religion in the world, for we are here brought back to the origin of all religions: "awe at the mysterious and unknown."² In many temples stand *Lingas*, often of a grossly realistic character, which are still worshipped, and against certain trees in the jungle may be seen piles of *phallic* emblems rudely carved out of sticks.

In Brahminism Siva holds his place as the destroyer, and in this character he must be identified with the Vedic Rudra, but he was also associated with the idea of generative power. His body is encircled by a snake, and the *Linga* is his symbol. Vishnu, on the other hand, represented the opposite principle in nature, symbolised by the conch shell. As Mahadeva, Siva was the Great God, to whom belonged the attributes of all the other gods. The

¹ The winged globe of Egypt is another form of the same symbol.

² C. Staniland Wake, *op. cit.* p. 10.

trident of Siva is emblematic of the mystic three in one, the being complete in himself, and in many images of Siva the same idea is expressed by the outstretched thumb and first and little fingers of one hand.¹ So also the *Lingam* is symbolic of the perfect being and, like the Lotus and the Bo-tree, is an emblem of the Buddha.

¹ From the trident is derived the *fleur de lys* of France. A similar form of holding the fingers is employed by peasants in Italy to ward off the evil eye.



BRONZE FIGURES

From the author's collection

CHAPTER V

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE YELLOW ROBE

"Listen to the merchant and it appears you have yet ten thousand years to live ;

Talk with the priest and you will die a thousand deaths each day."

Siamese Proverb.

IN the preceding chapters I have tried to set down the essential beliefs of Buddhism and some of the common superstitions with which it is surrounded. The present chapter and the one which follows are concerned more with showing how far their religion enters into the daily lives of the people.

And first it is necessary to say that those who never go out of Bangkok cannot hope to know the Siamese. Corrupted by the example of Europeans and demoralised by contact with the riff-raff of all nations, the native of the capital must not be held up as a fair sample of his race. Yet even amidst these surroundings it seems to me that the Siamese keep in a wonderful degree the spirit of their religion. That the children are well fed and as happy as the day is long is an accident of their environment, but the affection lavished on them by their parents is surely due to something more than this. And their compassion extends very generally to the lower animals. A few of the *gharries* are owned and driven by Siamese. Their ponies are always well cared for, and the difference between

them and the ponies from the Chinese and Indian stables is remarkable.

There is no such blot on the morality of Bangkok as the *Yoshiwara* of Tokio. At night the streets are almost deserted, and drunkenness, though an increasing evil, is still comparatively rare. It is not generally accounted safe to venture alone after dark into the Chinese quarter, and indeed one would hesitate so to explore the slums of many of our own cities, but if our fancy prompts us we may stumble at any hour of the night through the pitchy blackness of the narrow Siamese markets, and no one will molest us.

At about the age of twenty every respectable Siamese enters a monastery, where he stops just as long as he feels inclined, but two months is the shortest stay which is considered decent. The neophyte rides to the temple with a crown upon his head, escorted by his relatives and friends, bearing presents for the monks. By this they recall the last splendid appearance of Prince Sri T'hat T'ha before he renounced all to become a poor ascetic. In the *bawt* the neophyte puts off his gorgeous raiment and dons the yellow robe, the emblem of humility, for in olden time this was the garb of outcasts. Sometimes little boys of ten or twelve are admitted as novices and wear the yellow robe like their elders. They often enter the *wat* on the day of the cremation of a parent, for whom they hope to ensure a happy transmigration by the merit which they acquire. There are also other boys living in the *wat*, one attached to each monk as his *chila* or disciple, and to perform menial duties for him. The monks may not touch silver but their *chilas* sometimes receive it for them.

By putting on the yellow robe a Siamese acquires a new social importance. I remember a coolie on a house-boat belonging to a friend of mine, who fell off into the river. The matter was not reported for some time, and when my friend heard of it, it was considered that the coolie must have either swum ashore or been drowned, and that in any case it was too late to go back and look for him. Some months later, while we were at dinner in Bangkok, a monk was shown in, and taking a chair asked how we were getting on. We thought it very friendly of him, but as we could not remember ever having seen him before we did not quite understand it. Presently, however, he explained that he was the missing coolie. He had spent the interval in a monastery, and had now come to get the balance of his pay which was still owing to him. Had he come back as a coolie he would have approached in very humble fashion, but coming as a monk he treated it merely as a little business matter between equals, and throughout the interview showed no embarrassment.

Concerning the monasteries very different opinions have been arrived at by different writers, and some declare that they are sinks of iniquity. It appears to me that the majority of the monks are simple, kindly men, of little learning, practising no great austerities and possessing no great virtues but, on the whole, leading blameless lives. But many enter the monasteries from no other motive than laziness, and some belong to the lowest criminal class who hope thus to escape from justice. These are the men who bring the monasteries into ill repute. I have lived for many months within the precincts of

wats, where I have always been so hospitably received, and have met with so much courtesy, that it would be ingratitude indeed in me to speak against them. Though my opinion cannot be wholly favourable I only desire that some reformer should arise who would insist upon a stricter observance of the rules. So would he sweep out the lazy, worthless element, and in so doing would deserve well of his country.

King Mongkut, who was himself a monk for twenty-six years before his accession, was fully aware of the evils arising from a lax interpretation of the rules, and whilst still in the monkhood he became the founder of the Pra Dhamayut sect. They may be distinguished by their habit of carrying the iron begging-bowls before them with both hands, while the older sect, the Pra Mahanikai, hold the bowls against their left hips with their left hands only. But even the reformed Pra Dhamayut do not by any means obey the strict letter of the law. Except during the Buddhist Lent, from the full moon of July to the full moon of October, it is not the custom for all the monks to make the daily pilgrimage to collect their food. Many remain in their rooms, and their relatives send them in food by their *chilas*, and even those who ostensibly receive their food at the hands of the pious often throw the contents of their bowls to the dogs on their return, and themselves partake of a more appetising meal prepared in the monastery.

The people themselves are not blind to the faults of the monks. They know, for at one time or another they have all been monks themselves, but they know too how hard it is to keep the rule.

Never would they tolerate the flagrant immorality which is sometimes imputed to the monks, but that some monks are great humbugs they are willing to admit. There is a story known by the somewhat misleading title of "The Honest Monk" which, as it is entertaining, I will proceed to relate, though I do not know that it contains a moral. It comes from an old Siamese source, and I heard it from the lips of Prince Bijit, the King's brother.

"There was once a virtuous monk who made a vow that he would walk in a straight line across the country, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. So he set out; but by-and-by he came to a palm-tree which grew right in his path, and being unable to turn either to the right hand or to the left he was obliged to clamber up the tree. Having arrived at the top he reflected that it was against his principles to descend, so there he remained. Now it chanced that an elephant driver was passing by, and seeing the monk sitting in the top of the palm-tree he called on him to come down, but the monk would not. Then the elephant driver, being filled with pity, drove his elephant beneath the palm and caused it to lift him up in its trunk, so that he might catch hold of the virtuous monk and take him down, but the elephant being alarmed by the rustling of the palm-leaves ran away, and left the driver clinging to the tree. Anon four villagers, attracted by his cries, approached and saw the virtuous monk and the elephant driver sitting in the top of the palm-tree; so they ran and fetched a blanket, and held it beneath the tree, one standing at each corner. Then the elephant driver persuaded the virtuous monk to jump into the blanket,

but when he alighted in its centre the four corners of the blanket were drawn together, and the heads of the four villagers who held it met with such violence that they were immediately smashed, whilst the elephant driver, following after, was dashed to pieces upon the ground. Then the virtuous monk, reflecting that he had caused the deaths of five men, bethought him how meritorious an act it would be to cremate those five bodies. Now he had but small store of money, so having hidden four of the bodies, he went and found a charcoal-burner, to whom he showed the fifth body, and contracted with him for six *salung* to supply sufficient charcoal wherewith to cremate it.¹ Then the charcoal-burner covered the body with charcoal and set it alight, and when naught remained but a heap of ashes the virtuous monk handed him the six *salung* and let him go. Then the virtuous monk fetched one of the remaining bodies, and having covered it with the ashes he ran swiftly after the charcoal-burner and told him that the body was still there untouched by the fire, so the charcoal-burner, wondering much, returned with a further supply of charcoal and again cremated the body. But once more, when he had gone on his way, the virtuous monk covered another body with the ashes, and overtaking the charcoal-burner told him that the body was not yet consumed. In this way all the five bodies were cremated for the price agreed upon for one."

Early each morning the monks assemble in the *bawt* and repeat the doxologies. Then some go to teach in the monastery school, others who are clever carpenters, busy themselves with boat build-

¹ A *salung* is the fourth part of a *tical*.

ing or repairs to the temple buildings, and perhaps the majority do nothing. At midday they take a second meal, and after this they may touch no more solid food until the next morning. This rule, which involves some hardship, is faithfully observed. The afternoon passes in very much the same way as the morning. In the evening they bathe in the river, if the *wat* is built upon the bank, and if not there is almost always a pond within the grounds. The monks may not leave the precincts of the *wat* after dark, and so, about half-past six, one of the boys runs up the steps of the bell tower and tolls the bell to mark the hour, while all the dogs howl in unison.

During "Lent"¹ the monks assemble once again in the *bawt* at evening, and if we look in we shall see the rows of kneeling yellow figures between the great pillars, while the light of candles, reflected from the Buddha, shines down upon them, and the sonorous old Pali chants beat and throb against the black vault above.

The monks' rooms are clean and neat, and scantily furnished in keeping with their simple life. Mats are spread on the boarded floor, and in one corner is a low bedstead. Probably there is a cupboard on which are a few ornaments, and there may be a picture on the wall. Somewhere there is sure to be an image of the Buddha.

From the cupboard the monk produces a tea-pot and two tiny cups, which he will fill alternately as fast as his visitor can empty them, and when they know us well they will show us many treasures.

¹ From July to October, the time of the worst rains, when the monks remain in the *wats*.

In one room is an ancient image; another boasts a silver tea-pot, and again there are carved ivory fans and chessmen, orange with age. Some monasteries possess large collections of the sacred writings kept in fine old cabinets of black lacquer gilt. The doxologies are generally written with a style on strips of palm-leaf with gilded edges. They are written in Siamese, but the Cambodian character is used.

During the dry season it is the custom for monks in the village monasteries to make a pilgrimage to the Prabat mountain (on which is the footprint of the Buddha), or to some other holy spot. They carry with them nothing but the iron begging-bowl, a bag containing a few necessities, and a large umbrella. In the heat of the day we may often see their white umbrellas dotted over the fields, and converted into little tents by strips of linen hung all round.

The monks are subject only to the superiors of their own order, and they have a complete system of government analogous to that of the temporal power. The chief dignitaries of the order are appointed by the King, who is thus the temporal head of the religion. These dignitaries receive official titles and may properly be spoken of as "priests," a term which is incorrectly applied to the mass of those living in the *wats*.

Any grave offence is punished by instant expulsion, and the offender then comes under the civil law which treats him with extreme severity. Lesser breaches of the rules are atoned for by the performance of small penances, such as sweeping round the Bo-tree or drawing water. Confession



THE VILLAGE MONASTERY
ON THE MORNING OF A FESTIVAL

is sometimes practised. The penitent goes alone to his spiritual superior who, it appears, professes to absolve him from his sin. The head of a monastery can himself be absolved by the head of some other monastery. This absolution from sin may be noticed as one of the many points in which the principles of Buddhism differ from its practice in Siam. A discipline which was formerly imposed on a monk who had recently joined the order was that he should watch, alone, by the side of a corpse through the long night. About the hour of midnight, they say, the corpse stood upright and then lay back again upon its bier. So was the monk to learn not to fear the spirits of the dead.

Throughout the year one religious festival follows hard upon the last, and in their observance they are all alike. On the morning of a festival the monks forego the usual round to collect their food, and the begging-bowls are ranged upon a long low wall within the temple grounds. Soon after daybreak the people dressed in their best throng to the temple, bearing flat wicker trays on which are heaped up rice and *kap kow*, "the usual trimmings," in blue china bowls. There are a few men amongst them, but by far the greater number are women and children. They walk past the begging-bowls, putting a spoonful of rice and a selection of the various dainties into each. Then they turn to the *bawt* where the monks are already assembled, and one of the monks repeats the five sins from which all must abstain, and some additional commandments which are binding on the monks and which others may voluntarily observe. The monk pauses at the end of each law, and the people

repeat it after him, resolving, for this day at least, to observe it.

Then while the monks are eating the people go down to the river, and kneeling at the water's edge they pour the water drop by drop over a leaf, saying, "May this food which we have given to the use of the holy ones be of benefit to our fathers and mothers, and all of our relatives who have passed away."¹ In this curious custom we again see the natural longing of the people proving stronger than those teachings of their religion which are founded upon pure reason. So too will a man who has shown great charity, or built a splendid pagoda, sometimes desire to share the merit of his act with one who is dear to him, and there are stories of those who have desired that all the merit which they have made during their life-time may be placed, not to their own credit, but to the advancement of the human race.² The strict Buddhist would say that such a one would, in spite of himself, advance still farther on the path, by reason of the spirit in which his charity was performed, but not by all his prayers could he help his weaker brethren along. There is no vicarious sacrifice in Buddhism.

To return to the festival, the remainder of the day is spent in merry-making and, if it be the Siamese New Year (Kroot T'hai), in gambling, for at this season as at the Roman Saturnalia (in December), the gambling laws are relaxed, and everyone may set up his roulette-table or bring out his pack of cards.

¹ This is doubtless connected with the custom of pouring water on the ground, see p. 92.

² So also the Bodhisats, see p. 105, and novices, see p. 116.

At the festival of Songkran, which marks the beginning of the old Siamese solar year, it is the custom to bathe the images of the Buddha and also the monks and old people. The young folk make this an occasion for throwing water over each other amidst much fun and laughter.

One of the prettiest festivals is that of Kaw Pra Sai, when the people bring fresh sand to strew upon the ground within the temple precincts. Under the leafy trees the people are gathered in their brightest dresses. The girls in beautiful shot silk *panungs*, and gaily coloured scarves about their breasts; the children with sweet-scented wreaths around their carefully tended top-knots. There they all build little sand castles, laughing and chattering and vying with each other in tasteful arrangement and decoration. One girl will make a large cone in the centre, surrounded by many smaller ones, all neatly turned out of a mould, and the whole will be surrounded by a little wall. In each she sticks a tiny paper flag, and strips of coloured paper are wound round them so that when the ground is covered with hundreds of these little cones the effect is very pretty. The scarlet blossoms of "the flame of the forest" strew the fresh sand; here and there a bundle of incense sticks smokes lazily, and in the shadows little candles are twinkling. On one side is set a large bowl with a notched staff rising from the centre. Here are deposited small offerings of money which are devoted to buying sand. In the old days, they say, when men sinned, all the fish and other inhabitants of the water came to the river's edge, and each carried away a grain of sand, and not till every grain was removed was the stain of

that sin purged away. So now they look upon these gifts as having a special significance, and as an atonement for some particular sin. A poor old man stops for a moment, and reverently raising his joined hands places a few *atts* in the bowl. Then a young girl comes forward and sticks a piece of silver in the staff, already ornamented with many such. She looks so pretty and so pensive kneeling there that one thinks surely her sins cannot be great.

During the T'hot Khatin holidays the people make gifts of cloth for the monks' robes. Long ago when the teachings of the Buddha were fresh in men's minds, the monks wore robes made only of such stray pieces of cloth as they could pick up and piece together. In memory of this certain pious people labour to make a robe during the course of a single day and night, in a patch-work pattern called the Khatina pattern. But many of the robes presented at this season are of silk, and the old simplicity no longer exists.

The King himself makes very large presents and visits very many of the *wats*. On one day he passes in a glittering procession through the streets, borne high in a palanquin, and preceded by a double row of lictors bearing fasces. Nothing is in greater contrast to Western ideas than the perfect silence with which the great multitudes of spectators watch the passing of their King, for in this way they show their deep respect. But the most gorgeous pageant is when the King goes by water in the great dragon barge. This barge is one hundred and fifty feet in length, and eleven feet wide, cut out of a single trunk and richly carved. In the centre there is a canopy of cloth

of gold, and stem and prow curve high out of the water. The barge is propelled by sixty paddlers dressed in ancient style, with red jackets, and caps provided with flaps which cover their necks.¹ They keep perfect time, and at the finish of the stroke they toss their paddles and a flash of liquid gold runs along the three-score lifted blades. For a few seconds they hold them so, giving a peculiar "jodel," and then another powerful sweep sends the great barge on her way. After her come many others, but none so splendid as the King's.

In the cool December nights the great annual fair at Pu Kao T'hong takes place. Around the foot of the Golden Mount springs up a narrow circular lane of stalls, and through it till the small hours of the morning moves a dense throng, all intent on having a merry time. Yet the quiet and orderliness of the crowds is remarkable. A small rowdy element there may be, but they are powerless to mar the general good fellowship, for by a wise police regulation all sticks must be left at the gate, and it is illegal in Bangkok to carry knives or firearms. Almost every stall is provided with some device for gambling, and at the back the prizes are ranged in tempting order. We find that we must stake nearly the full value of an article before we are allowed to play for it, but the little girls who stand behind the stalls are so fascinating that we readily submit to this robbery; and when we come away with our arms full of toys a crowd of children will follow us until we have given them all away.

When tired of this innocent gambling we may visit the theatres and shadow pantomimes. The

¹ See Frontispiece.

fun goes on without a pause, but all the while little knots of men and women detach themselves from the merry-makers and climb the long stair, to place their lighted candles amongst the hundred others that are twinkling before the shrine on the summit of the mount.

Then there is the more aristocratic fair at the new Royal *wat*. Here we may be served with tea by the fair hands of a little princess, who enjoys the fun of emptying our pockets fully as much as her humbler sisters.

Twice a year all the Government officials must repair to the palace, and drink the water of allegiance.¹ Swords have been dipped in the water, and the act of drinking signifies that should they prove unfaithful to the King the sword shall be their portion.

The King's birthday is celebrated for three days, during which there is great rivalry amongst the people as to who shall provide the gayest display of flags and Chinese lanterns. At night the streets are a blaze of brightness, and fairy palaces of light arise on every side. In all their decorations they show a tastefulness which few Western nations have reached, and the scene on the river when the illuminations are reflected in the dark water can scarcely be equalled in any other country.

Certain festivals are of Brahminical origin, and in them white-robed Brahmin priests still take part. Such are the festival of ploughing, which marks the time of sowing seed, and the quaint swinging festival which corresponds to our harvest thanksgiving.

¹ This, of course, does not apply to Europeans in the Government Service.

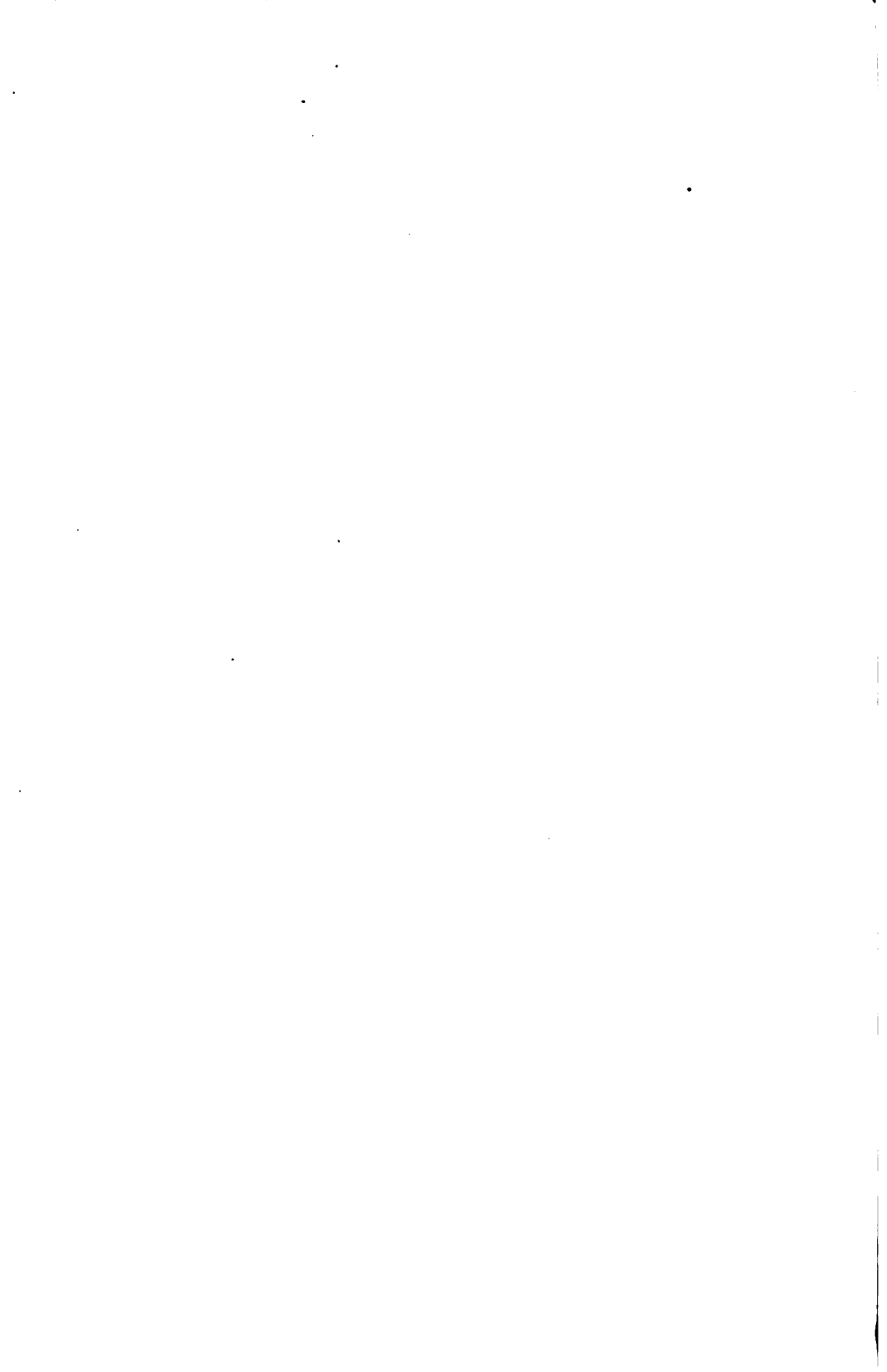


A BELL TOWER

To face page 138



THE STEPS OF PU KAO T'HONG



From a huge frame one hundred feet in height, standing near the centre of the town, a plank is suspended, and at a little distance before it is a pole to which is tied a bag containing coins. A crew of four men mount to the plank, on which they kneel and set it swinging lengthwise, till the leader can catch the bag of coins in his teeth.

Of Brahminical origin, too, is the beautiful festival of Loy Krat'hong, when at night all the people set floating down the river little rafts, cleverly made out of leaves, and bearing lights.

In the life of every Siamese there are certain epochs which I must briefly notice. We shall find that they are generally marked by observances of a religious, or semi-religious, character. When a child is born the mother is often kept in one room for forty days, close to a hot fire. This is to drive out the evil humours from her body, but it not unfrequently drives out the life as well, and with it that of her new-born babe. The custom, which is also observed by the Burmans, is very ancient, but it is now fast dying out. If the child survives this ordeal of his early youth he is not troubled any more until the day of top-knot cutting is reached, in his ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth year.

Amongst the Brahmins there were anciently ten rites: the rite of name giving, the rite of eating the first rice, the rite of teaching the first steps, and so on. Of these the Burmans have kept the rite of ear boring, and the Siamese that of cutting the top-knot. It is celebrated with elaborate ritual in which Buddhist monks always take a prominent part. As I have already mentioned, the rite is not universally observed in the case of boys, but in the lives of the

girls it forms, perhaps, the most important event, and is never omitted.

About this tonsure ceremony books have been written, and those who would know the details of the ordeal which a high-born damsel has to undergo may study them with profit. It is not for them that I record here my recollection of a top-knot cutting. It was in a little village where I had my camp, together with a friend, engaged like myself in survey work. We were on excellent terms with our neighbours, and every evening a semicircle of children would sit before our tent, listening with round-eyed wonder to the strange songs which proceeded from our gramophone. Three of our little friends, all girls, were to have their top-knots cut, and for two days before the event there was a great making of cakes in preparation for the expected guests. On the evening before the actual ceremony we were asked up into the house, which was crowded with relatives and friends. On a slightly raised dais, a little apart, sat five monks droning out texts, the end of each verse being marked by the father of the girls, beating on a gong. Grovelling on their knees and elbows before the monks were the little girls themselves, and very tired they were before it was all over. They were dressed in their best, with antique silk shawls woven with silver thrown over them, and the precious top-knots trans-fixed with gold skewers, but not even this finery, nor the solemnity of the occasion, could prevent them from turning their heads and grinning over their shoulders a friendly greeting to us. Long before they were allowed to get up we were conducted into another room, to partake of Siamese

sweets. At length the girls were released from their most uncomfortable position, and after they had been made to stand in a row before us and make a little bob by way of curtsy, they were allowed to sit down and chat, only one of them was continually getting into trouble for not sitting elegantly before the company.

They said that they were very tired, but scorned our suggestion that they had better go to bed, as they meant to sit up and watch the *lakhon* (theatrical performance) which had been hired from Bangkok for the occasion. It was held under an attap roof, from which hung a few smoky lamps, casting occasional gleams of light on the performers and audience. At one end a large soda-water case, borrowed from our camp, served as a dais, and at the other end squatted the band. Behind the dais was the green-room, to which my Siamese boy early retired, in order to lend the weight of his experience to the proceedings. The *lakhon* was not a very good one; the band was discordant and the big drum intolerable, but to these simple villagers everything was wonderful. The leading lady, with her whited face and tinsel head-dress, was a dream of beauty, and when she reclined upon the case of soda-water the three little maidens fingered all her finery, regardless of the performance. Meanwhile the less favoured portion of the audience crowded nearer and nearer till the actors scarce had room to move, roaring with laughter at the clown's jokes, not one of which ran any risk of being lost for want of repetition. The gramophone proved a successful counter attraction, and the children of our village were delighted to show off their knowledge of its

mechanism to those who had come in from the surrounding country for the occasion.

Very early the next morning the monks were in their place again. They held a white thread which passed around the three children, forming a circle which no evil spirits could break. The girls were now in very plain attire, the top-knots undone and bound with wisps of grass, and in their hands they held powerful charms, written upon dried strips of palm-leaf. Very soon the head monk took a pair of scissors and snipped off the locks. Then the father and uncles entered the magic circle and shaved off the remaining hair, in which operation they were assisted by the monk pouring on water. When their heads were as bald as billiard balls the little girls sat outside, while first the monks, then the father and mother, then the grandparents, and finally the other relatives and the distinguished visitors, poured water over them till the poor little things were shivering with cold. After this was over they retired and changed their wet things for very gorgeous dresses, and when they came out once more they were loaded with all the family jewels. Then the photographer was confronted with group after group, beginning with the heroines of the occasion and proceeding with all the members of the family in turn, and the old grandfather would have his joke with the young people, and every one was very merry. Had not the stock of plates run out the whole assemblage would have had their portraits taken, for although the country folk are often shy, at first, of standing before the camera, they only want someone to give them a lead to be eager to do so. The result of



THREE LITTLE MAIDS

To face page 132

the most important photograph on this occasion may be seen on the previous page. In the afternoon all the friends of the family brought small presents of money, and a list of the amounts was carefully kept, because in the event of a similar festivity occurring in another family the exact sum that they had given must be returned—just as we give wedding presents. Finally everybody took pieces of white string and tied them round the girls' wrists, with a blessing.

After the top-knot has been cut the child is legally of a marriageable age. It is unusual for girls to marry before the age of sixteen, or for boys until they are twenty, but it is still more unusual for them not to marry at all. A marriage is often in the nature of a runaway match, a most informal proceeding altogether. In the case of a more regularly conducted affair it is not customary to consult the young lady's wishes. The suitor must employ a go-between, who will settle with the girl's parents the amount of money which he is to provide to build a house for his bride, and how much is to go to the parents themselves as "the price of the mother's milk." Then if everything is happily arranged the marriage is celebrated with much feasting and jollity. Monks are invited to the feast and to receive presents, because this is a meritorious action and must bring good fortune, but there is no religious ceremony.

So, too, monks are called to the bed-side of the dying, that by their mere presence all evil spirits may be kept away.

The cremation of the dead is celebrated with all the pomp that the means of the relatives will allow.

The body is often subjected to a curious process, a mixture of mercury and honey being poured through it, and thus prepared it is sometimes kept for years before the actual cremation takes place. The poorer classes cannot afford this, and if the body is not cremated immediately after death it is, in their case, buried in the ground, to be afterwards exhumed and burnt.

The actual ceremony of cremation usually lasts three days. The coffin is placed in a special building attached to the temple, and there the monks come and read from a sacred book, which describes the joys of the various heavens, and the pains of hell. Then they pray for merit, that the deceased may be enabled to enter heaven, and while they pray they hold a ribbon whose end enters the coffin, and along which holy influences are supposed to pass.

But these rites occupy but little time. Most of the day is spent in feasting, watching theatrical performances, and playing innumerable games of chance. On the evening of the third day the coffin is borne out, and placed under a pointed roof (*maradof*) which is supported by four tall posts inclining inward in the form of a pyramid. Here the most distinguished person present sets alight the pyre.

In the case of a Royal cremation everything is on the most lavish scale. Gorgeous spectacles are provided by day and magnificent displays of fireworks by night. Enormous numbers of the monks receive presents, and limes containing coins are freely scattered amongst the people. These represent the fruit of the tree which gratifies all desires, and grows in the paradise of Indra.

But the cremation that I remember best was of a little boy, a *chila*, in a monastery far up country. It was dark when I arrived, but the *sala* was brilliantly illuminated, and sitting round mats on the floor with packs of cards were groups of eager players and interested spectators. The open-air theatre was thronged with villagers who marked their approval of the clown's antics by loud guffaws, while the fireworks banged and rockets soared above the palms. And apart from all this, near the river and all unheeded, rested the little coffin, half consumed and burning with a wan, fitful flame.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER VI

THE PEES AND CHARMS

"To respect spiritual beings but to keep aloof from them may be called wisdom."—*Saying of CONFUCIUS.*

OFTEN as you go through the gardens or amongst the trees which fringe the river side, you will see a little house, raised up upon a pole. These have nothing to do with Buddhism. Some of them are erected as dwelling-places for the Taywadahs, the beautiful spirits who watch over big trees. The Siamese are very averse to cutting down a tree lest it should harbour a Taywadah, and none but the lowest will undertake this task. Should they destroy a tree in which a Taywadah dwelt they would suffer the greatest misfortunes, but by building him a house and showing him respect they gain his powerful favour. But by far the greater number of the little houses are placed there for a very different reason. The spirits of the dead—the Pees—inhabit the woods and streams. The water Pees are so malevolent that they sometimes eat men, whilst their sylvan brethren will suddenly grimace at you through the foliage, or come towards you tearing their breasts apart. This is unpleasant, and in order that you may not see them it is best to set up a little house, and to place in it offerings of flowers and dolls, and to scatter rice before it on the ground. This will propitiate the Pees, and they will leave you alone.

Sometimes chickens are sacrificed to the Pees, in violation of the Buddhist commandment to take no life. The spirits of evil-doers—the Pee Pret—are terrible to behold. They are taller than palm-trees, and their mouths are so small that they can never satisfy the hunger which gnaws at them continually. The Pee Pret are not at all well disposed towards men, but as a rule the ordinary Pees will do no harm, only the Siamese do not want to see them. Animals can often see Pees when men are unable to do so, and when at night all the dogs of the village howl together it is because a Pee is passing by.

When a corpse is being removed from a house to the place where it is to be cremated, it is very often carried through a hole in the wall, lest the Pee should refuse to pass by the door, and remain behind. If a man dies of cholera he must not be cremated but buried, and in all cases of sudden death the corpse must remain buried for some time before it can be cremated. Were the body to be immediately destroyed by cremation the Pee would return to its former dwelling-place. It would long to associate with its former relatives and they would all die. Whenever a man is thus buried, a Pee's house is placed near his grave, and in the house we generally find a clay image of a buffalo. This represents the fierce Torapee who fought with the no less terrible Pali, so that the fight raged over all the earth even to the confines of Mount Meru before Torapee was overcome. The purpose of the image is to scare the other Pees away, so that the Pee of the man who is buried there may not be disturbed; but some say that the Pees are not afraid of Tor-

pee, and that he is only placed there for them to ride upon.

Amongst the Laos there is a superstition that should a man sleep in a new house, other than he for whom it is intended, the house will be occupied by a Pee.

How prevalent the belief in Pees is may be seen in the course of half-an-hour's drive through the streets of Bangkok. At frequent intervals we shall pass a Chinese carpenter's shop, piled high with the little houses. Even the monks and men of good education are firmly convinced of their existence. It is rather difficult to explain to those who are ignorant of the occult teaching of the East what the learned amongst them really believe the Pee to be. It is not that part of man which I have before called the Soul—that part which subsists through incarnation after incarnation—but it is that which the Theosophists call an Astral body. This, they say, is simply the seat of man's lower nature. To it his animal passions and emotions may be communicated, whilst only that which goes deep into his intellectual nature is impressed upon the Soul.¹ The Pee may persist for a time after death, but gradually as the impulse which it received during life becomes exhausted, its component parts are scattered abroad.

Opposed to the fundamental principles of Buddhism is a belief in charms, yet there is scarcely a Siamese man or woman who does not possess a charm of some sort. The monks may not actually wear them, but they believe in them none the less,

¹ *Lectures on the Study of the Bhagavadgita*, by T. Subbarao Garu. Published by the Theosophical Society.



THE ENTRANCE TO WAT CHANG, BANGKOK

and carefully preserve them till such time as they leave the monastery. Much more, they violate one of the most stringent rules of their order, which enjoins them to have nothing to do with the supernatural, nor to arrogate to themselves any extraordinary powers, for they themselves make the charms, the efficiency of the charm depending on the sanctity of the maker and not at all on the devoutness of the wearer.

In the case of men charms are worn to prevent knives or bullets from wounding them, and women wear charms as a protection against sickness, and to make men love them. Even though a man is wearing a charm he can still be wounded by a woman, for against the opposite sex his charm is powerless; and if a woman touches a man's charm it loses its efficiency altogether. The charms worn by men are very often small images of the Buddha, carried in a little bag hung round the neck. The images are sometimes made of bronze, and their power is proportionate to their antiquity. Others are made of a powdered chalky clay, made into a paste with lustral water. This is water that has been placed before the image of the Buddha in a *bawt*, and in which candles from before the Buddha have been extinguished. It then possesses great virtues; the man who lies sick drinks it, and soldiers going forth to battle are sprinkled with it. At the time of the troubles with France in 1893, hundreds of little images were made in moulds at a Bangkok temple and given to the soldiers as charms. Sometimes the charm is actually let into the flesh, which soon grows over it and encloses it.

Another form of charm is a thin silver plate,

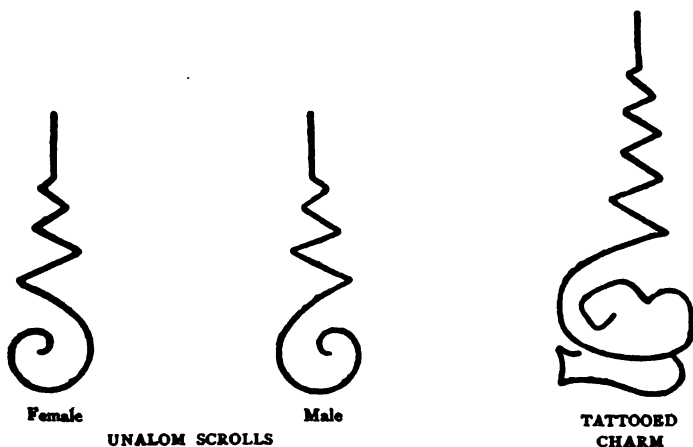
about an inch square. On this the monks scratch a curious pattern and the initials, in Cambodian characters, of the five Buddhas of this world cycle. The silver plate is then rolled into a little tube, threaded on a string and bound round the man's arm. In the case of a child it is generally hung round his neck. Sometimes short sentences are written on the plates: "Let no bullet harm the wearer; let no knife wound the bearer." Often two of the little tubes are threaded on the string, and between them is a piece of the leg-bone of a goose, which in some way is lucky.

Other charms which are worn, or carried in the waist cloth, are a bullet with which an animal has been shot, bullets engraved with mystic symbols, a tiger carved out of a tiger's tooth, which will preserve the wearer from being bitten, and pieces of calico on which are drawn magic squares.

Snakes will flee from a man who carries a certain seed that has a claw-like sprout. A very powerful charm is a black bean on which is cut the figure of Buddha, seated, and holding his hands before his eyes. These charms are said to be found in the tops of trees, where they are left by angels. In Japan we find the same idea of the closed eyes in the beneficent monkey, who covers his eyes that he may see no evil.

The custom of tattooing is not universal, as it is amongst the men in Burmah, but amongst the lower class Siamese there are few who do not bear curious devices somewhere about their bodies. Most of the tattooing is merely for ornament, but charms are also tattooed. A favourite tattooed charm is a certain Cambodian character which is made to form

the helix of a "Unalom" scroll. The device suggests the form of a Buddha in the attitude of contemplation. It is often seen upon the points of the shoulders, or on the breast or wrist, and some-



times it is tattooed upon the head. The tattooing is done by a monk, who then blows upon the place, repeating appropriate formulæ.

It is said that the hair between the Buddha's eyebrows grew in the shape of a "Unalom" scroll. During the tonsure ceremony a monk traces the scroll with his finger between the child's eyebrows. For a boy the scroll is made right-handed and for a girl it is made left-handed.

Women do not wear images of the Buddha as charms. I could never find out why this was, but perhaps the explanation of my Siamese boy is the correct one. He thought that they would soon grow tired of them and throw them away. A girl must have something to wear which is at the same time an ornament, so she has many of the little silver tubes tied round her wrist in the form of a

bracelet. Her charms are engraved differently from those of the men. Hers say, "Keep all sickness from me," and "May a man love me." And when she is married she will wear a charm round her neck, in the hope that she may bear a child. To this she soon adds another, that she may be safely delivered, and when the child is born she adds one more, that he may grow up strong and healthy; and so old women have strings and strings of the little tubes hung about them. Many of the tubes in these necklaces are as much as two or three inches long, some of silver and some of copper.

Men will tell you of many instances when their lives have been saved by charms, guns failing to go off when pointed at them and the like. Still, though the wearing of charms is universal, cases of wounding are also common. Then, they say, the wounded man cannot have been wearing a real charm; it must have been some common little image after all, or perhaps the monk who made it forgot to ask that it might prove effectual. If you have a charm it is very important to know whether it will really protect you or not. Some monks, not all by any means, can tell you this. I was once privileged to witness a test applied to a charm of my own, which had been given to me by a monk with whom I was very friendly. It was in a monk's room where I had been drinking tea with two or three of the monks, and the little *chilas* were there as well, waiting upon us. One of the monks took the charm, and kneeling down raised his joined hands to his forehead, and asked that if this were a true charm a sign might be given. Then, still kneeling, he held the charm in his clenched hand, outstretched to its fullest extent. Presently his arm

was violently agitated, he caught his breath and his face was contorted as I had once seen a water diviner's in England. Then he shuffled along on his knees, the half-fearful bystanders hastily making way for him, though they seemed moved more to amusement than awe, and the laughter of their young pupils was unrestrained. Finally the monk fell over on one side, and when he had recovered he declared that the charm was exceedingly powerful. He said that a mighty wind had come down upon him. He was unwilling to undertake another test as he felt exhausted, and moreover he was afraid of hurting himself during the paroxysm.

Horoscopes are sometimes cast in Siam, and the monks are frequently consulted for lucky days, while events of great importance are only undertaken on days fixed by Brahmin astrologers.

When a ceremony—such as a hair-cutting—is going on, the house, or the room in which the actual ceremony is taking place, will be surrounded by a white thread. This is to prevent any evil influence from entering. Similarly some men have a string tied round the wrist to keep the Pees away, and the Mons used to wear white fillets bound about their heads in battle. The custom originated in the *tabu* which was practised amongst the aboriginal inhabitants of Cambodia. It was indicated by some such visible sign as the white thread, and its purpose was to forbid strangers from entering a village which was suffering from an epidemic or celebrating some festival. Any person who broke the *tabu* was liable to very severe penalties, or even to be enslaved. After the tonsure ceremony the hair is hung upon trees in the jungle, or sometimes it is set adrift

in a leaf down the river, the idea being that with it is borne away all impurity. It would be very unlucky if any of it were to fall into the hands of an ill-wisher to the child, for, if so, all that he wished might befall the child would surely come to pass.

A form of blessing practised after the hair-cutting is called *Wien Tieng*. The child sits in the centre of a room, and the relatives and guests sit in a circle around it. They have three small fans of copper or silver, and on the back of each fan are stuck three lighted tapers. The fans are passed from hand to hand round the circle, and the smoke is wafted towards the child. I have seen the same ceremony performed towards a portrait of the King. The fans had then to be passed completely round the circle twenty-one times, but for an ordinary subject they make only five circuits.

The most revolting superstition is one firmly believed in by the lower classes. The Cambodians, they say, are able to manufacture a pill and throw it into the body of a man, when it will swell to a considerable size, perhaps a foot in diameter, and so cause his death. When the victim is cremated this swollen pill will be left, and in proof of this it may be seen when the rest of the body has been burnt. It is not unknown, even in Bangkok, for men to eat small portions of this unconsumed flesh, which they think renders them invulnerable, and to overcome their repugnance they first drink large quantities of spirits.

In a former chapter I have spoken of the carved figures before the gates of the temples. The guardian angels of the gates of the city, and of the palace, were far more terrible than these, for when a new gate was being erected soldiers lay in wait,

¹ *Alabaster, op. cit.* p. 212.

² *Op. cit.* p. 278.

and seizing the first four persons who passed that way buried them alive beneath the gate-posts.¹ An instance of this is said to have occurred during the reign of the present King's father, but the authority for the statement is not good.

The following custom related by Father Tachard is interesting because very similar to one which still prevails in England.² "They" (the Siamese) "say, that in Hell there are Angels who administer Justice, and take care to mark exactly all the bad Actions of Men, examine them after their Death and with extream severity punish them for the same. They have a ridiculous imagination as to the Judgment that then passes; they are persuaded that the first of these Judges whom they call Prayomppaban, hath a Book, wherein the Life of every particular man is registered, that he continually reads it over, and that when he comes to the Page which contains the History of that Man, he never fails to sneeze.

"Therefore it is, say they, that we sneeze upon Earth, and thence proceeds the Custom they have of wishing a happy and long Life to all that sneeze."



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER VII

SIAMESE ART

"Do not imitate the china cup which, once broken, cannot be recomposed ;
But follow the example of *Samrit* bronze which, even when shattered, is
still useful."

Maxim of PRA RUANG.

It must, I think, be admitted that the Siamese are an artistic people. Of their tastefulness I have already spoken, and a sense of beauty is very general amongst them. Yet they have produced very little that is of lasting merit, and of that little there is scarce any that has not been borrowed from other nations. Small as their achievements have been in this direction they are likely to be still less in future, for the people seem to have lost what little skill they once possessed, and there is now practically no native art or manufacture.

In the temples very much of the decoration is purely Chinese, due directly to the Chinese population. The art which the Siamese may claim as their own owes its origin to India, from whence it was derived either directly or through the Cambodians. Thus all that is good in their architecture came from Cambodia, but never did the Siamese equal their old masters. The earliest monuments in northern Siam were built of blocks of laterite. In the eleventh century A.D., that is to say when the ancestors of the Siamese were firmly established in

that part of the country, sandstone was employed to form the door-posts and lintels, and for carved images, but in the twelfth century their architecture was already in its decadence, and stone gave way to brick.¹ From that time brick and plaster prevailed, and together with wood they are now the only materials employed in Siam. Nor will the modern bricks bear comparison with the fine, close-grained bricks of the ancient structures, and the crumbling cement of to-day is but a poor substitute for that used in the old temples at Lopburi, where we see it moulded into flowing forms that have set harder than granite. When brick came into general use wood was introduced in place of the sandstone posts and lintels. The durability of the buildings suffered accordingly, but by the extended use of wood a great impetus was given to the art of wood-carving.² In the north where wood is plentiful this art naturally progressed more than in the south. Perhaps the finest example of wood-carving still remaining is the great door of the *wihan* at Wat Sutat in Bangkok, which was brought from Sukot'hai and dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century.³ As in most of their carvings, the figures and foliage are deeply undercut, and the whole door is richly gilt.

The Siamese no longer carve their doors, but the panels are covered with black lacquer, on which are gilded angels and conventional designs. Another very effective form of decoration is in mother-of-pearl, inlaid in the lacquer while it is in a soft state. Wooden bowls are often decorated with this

¹ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 218.

² *Ibid.* p. 226.

³ *Ibid.* p. 226.

inlaid work, and mica and coloured glass are also inlaid in the same way.

From Chieng-Mai comes a very distinctive lacquer-ware. Boxes and other articles are made of woven strips of bamboo, and coated with bone ash made into a paste with wood oil. Upon this a second coating of wood oil and cinnabar is applied, and allowed to harden, forming a smooth vermilion surface. The pattern is engraved and filled in with black varnish, and the whole is then brought to a high polish.

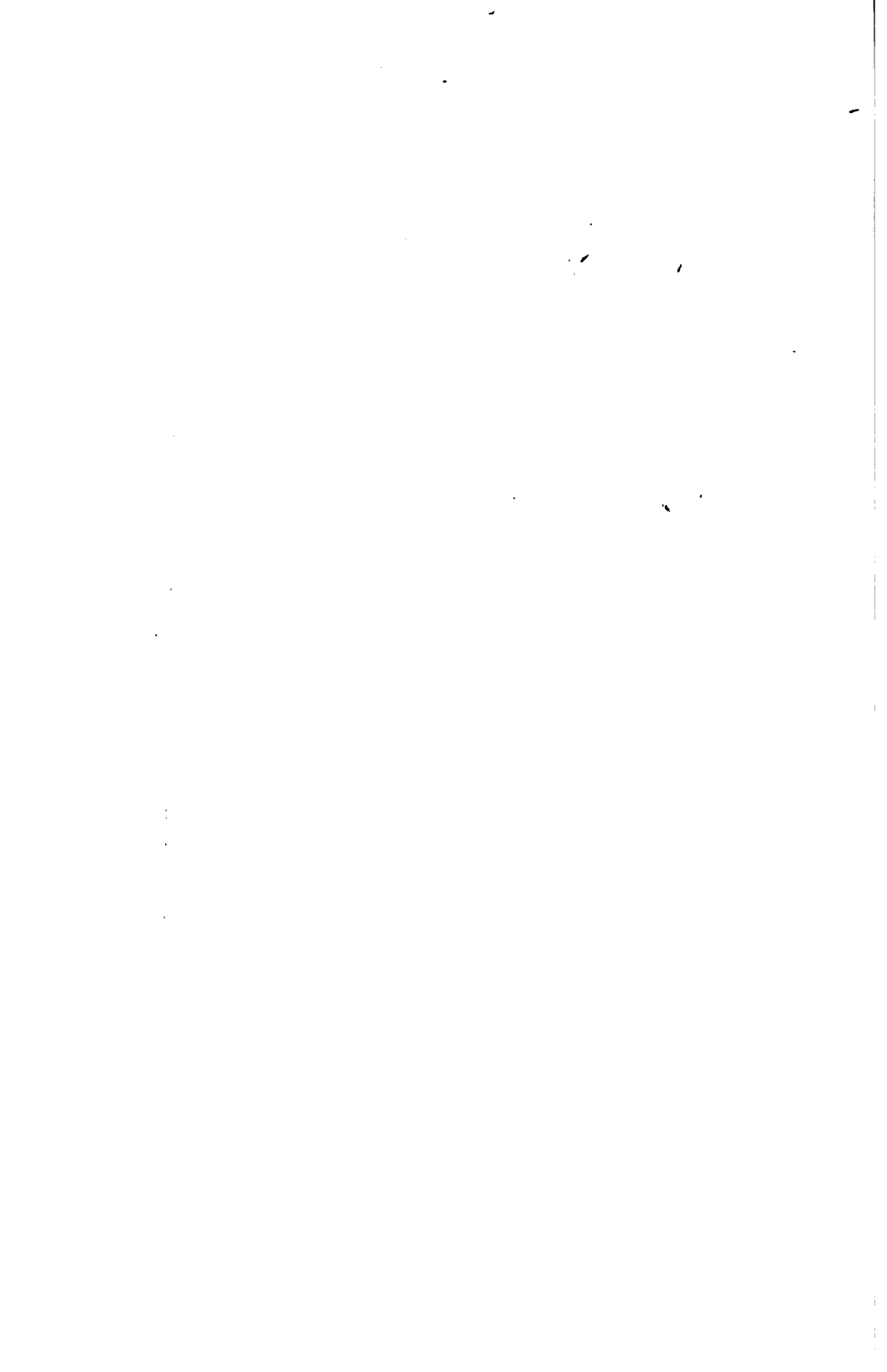
The prisoners in the gaol at Prapratom make small baskets and trays of a particular variety of fine grass, which they plait in a very dainty way. I have seen no specimens of this work from any other part of the country.

At Sawankalok the remains of extensive potteries have been found, consisting of a double row of mounds extending for about four miles, in which kilns have become embedded together with quantities of broken pots. These potteries produced a greyish celadon-ware of several shades, varying from coarse pottery to fine stoneware or rough porcelain.¹ The glazed crackled ware of the Chinese Sung dynasty was also imitated. Tradition assigns the kilns to Pra Ruang, who brought five hundred artificers from China, and the industry lasted from the middle of the twelfth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The paste which formed the base of the crackled ware is excessively hard. The glaze varied in colour from dark brown to greenish grey; it is very thick, and of extreme tenacity, but

¹ From particulars given by Mr. T. H. Lyle. See exhibit in the British Museum.



THE LOOK OF THE WIHAN, WAT SUTAT, BANGKOK



it was carelessly applied, and two or three pots often stuck together in the firing. In a bowl in the author's possession the glaze has run down over the surface and collected into great drops round the lower edge. The pots were generally ornamented on a wheel, by rings traced round the outside with the finger, but sometimes lines were drawn vertically all round the outside with a blunt tool or the thumb nail. The insides of the pots also show incised ornamentation. A fine example in the British Museum has a bold leaf pattern embossed upon the outside. More rarely painted decoration was employed.

Sawankalok is the only place in Siam where suitable clay was found; so this Sawankalok china is the only china that was ever made in Siam. In the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century much porcelain was made in China and decorated in Siam, and much was made entirely in China for the Siamese market. The most typical are the enamelled bowls and jars, decorated with the figures of divinities—Taypanom and Norasing—with a background of conventionalised flames. Other bowls were covered with a formal diaper of flowers in bright enamels upon a gilded ground, and some fruit dishes have centres of a very deep and beautiful blue. Those pieces which were decorated in Siam generally show some flaws and less perfect workmanship than those which were made entirely in China. The Siamese still make large jars, holding from fifteen to twenty gallons, of unglazed earthenware. The black or white Chieng-Mai pottery is covered with incised ornament of a character strongly resembling that found on some

very early British pottery.¹ In the manufacture of coloured tiles for the roofs of their temple buildings the Siamese show great proficiency.

The frescoes in the temples are usually very badly executed, but an exception must be made in favour of those at Wat Chang in Bangkok. From polished floor to sloping rafters the walls are completely covered with subjects minutely drawn, with a total lack of perspective but with colouring of extraordinary brilliancy, rivalling that of a Chinese painting on rice paper. Whenever the figure of the Buddha appears his skin is of gold, and for this gold leaf is always employed. Gilding is, indeed, an art which the Siamese thoroughly understand. A large proportion of the gold leaf which they use so freely is imported, but some is made by Chinese workmen in Bangkok.

The oldest images of the Buddha were carved in stone, sometimes in several pieces carefully fitted together. Sandstone was the material generally employed, but small images were also made of quartz, alabaster and jade. The most famous image of all is the "Emerald Buddha" which, according to tradition, fell from heaven into the Laos country four hundred years ago, and with which the fortunes of Siam are indissolubly bound up. It was of terrible omen for the Siamese when, on the tenth anniversary of the coming of the French in 1893, a building in the Royal temple, near that in which the image is now kept, took fire and was partially destroyed. The "Emerald Buddha" was removed to the palace for safety, and replaced some days later

¹ See the lower illustration, p. 5, vol. i., Gardiner's *Student's History of England*.

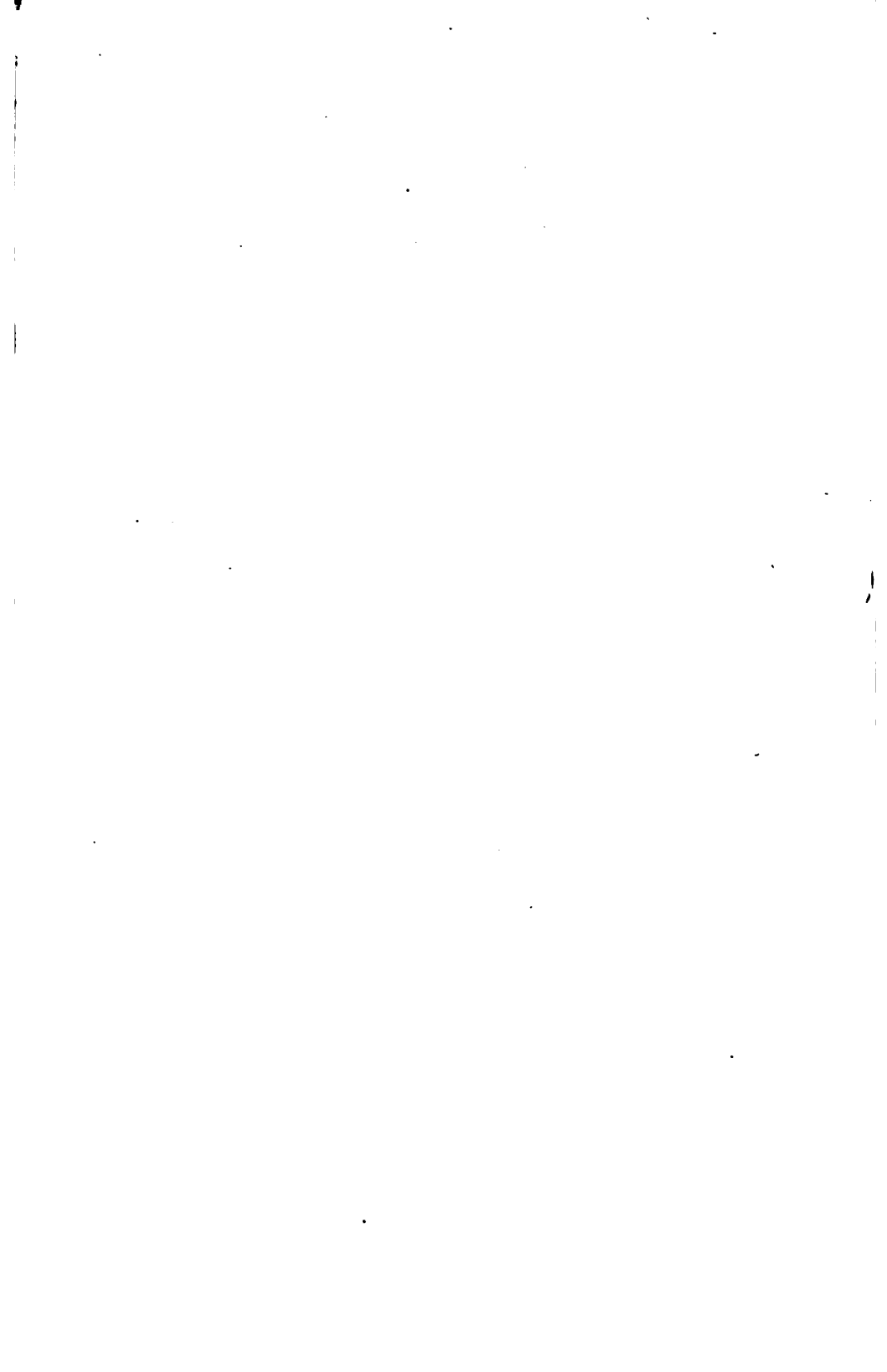


CHINA, FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION, ONE-FIFTH FULL SIZE

FLORAL DIAPER
DECADENT TAYPANOM

SAWANKALOK
SAWANKALOK
FRUIT DISH

LOTUS PATTERN
TAYPANOM AND NORASING



with great pomp. The image is about eighteen inches in height, and though carved not out of emerald but of deep green jade or jasper, it is of priceless value. At certain seasons it is robed in vestments of pure gold, and many other images in this temple are made of gold and blaze with precious stones.

The art of casting in bronze was known to the Siamese from very early times, and in the thirteenth century A.D. images of considerable size were made in this way.¹ Then, as now, the method employed was that known as the *cire perdue* process. This method was probably in vogue in ancient Greece, and it has been revived in Europe by some modern sculptors. The image is roughly moulded in clay which is then covered with a layer of wax, of the thickness which it is desired that the metal shall be. The wax is very carefully modelled, and when the finishing touches have been given it is in its turn covered with fine clay, in a semi-fluid condition, which takes a perfect impression of the wax. The image is then baked over a slow fire, and as the wax melts it runs out through suitable openings made for the purpose, and it is collected to use again. The core and the outer shell of clay are left with a hollow annular space between, and into this the molten metal is poured. The image is allowed to cool and then the outer clay is broken off, but the core, burnt to a hard brick, remains encased in metal. Large images are cast in several pieces and afterwards fitted together. The actual process of casting is often performed with great ceremony, and gold rings and jewels are thrown

¹ Gerini, *op. cit.* p. 225.

into the melting-pot. The most colossal images of all are built of brick and plaster, and cheap images are made of wood.

Whether the image is carved in wood or in stone, or whether it is built of brick or cast in bronze, it is almost invariably covered with a smooth coating of black lacquer, and upon this gold leaf is spread, whilst the eyes are often inserted in mother-of-pearl. Only when the image is made of some valuable material is this lacquering and gilding omitted. Images made of the finer alloys are generally polished, a process more expensive than gilding. These fine alloys are of almost infinite variety, but most of them contain a large proportion of silver. Occasionally images are seen in which two different alloys have been used to form the body and the robe.

In the modelling of the images little artistic skill is shown. It must be remembered that the back "flat as a golden plank," the arms "round, smooth and free from irregularities or veins, as a well-made candle," the toes and fingers long, tapering, and all of equal length, the ankle rising from the centre of the foot, and so jointed that the whole body can turn about it as upon a pivot, and many other peculiarities, were all considered the marks of a Grand Being, and so they were faithfully reproduced.¹ Yet as the artists developed a sense of beauty more in accordance with our own ideas, the traditional form of the images became modified, and some there are which are very fairly true to nature. The best period lasted from the thirteenth until the seventeenth century A.D. Small bronze

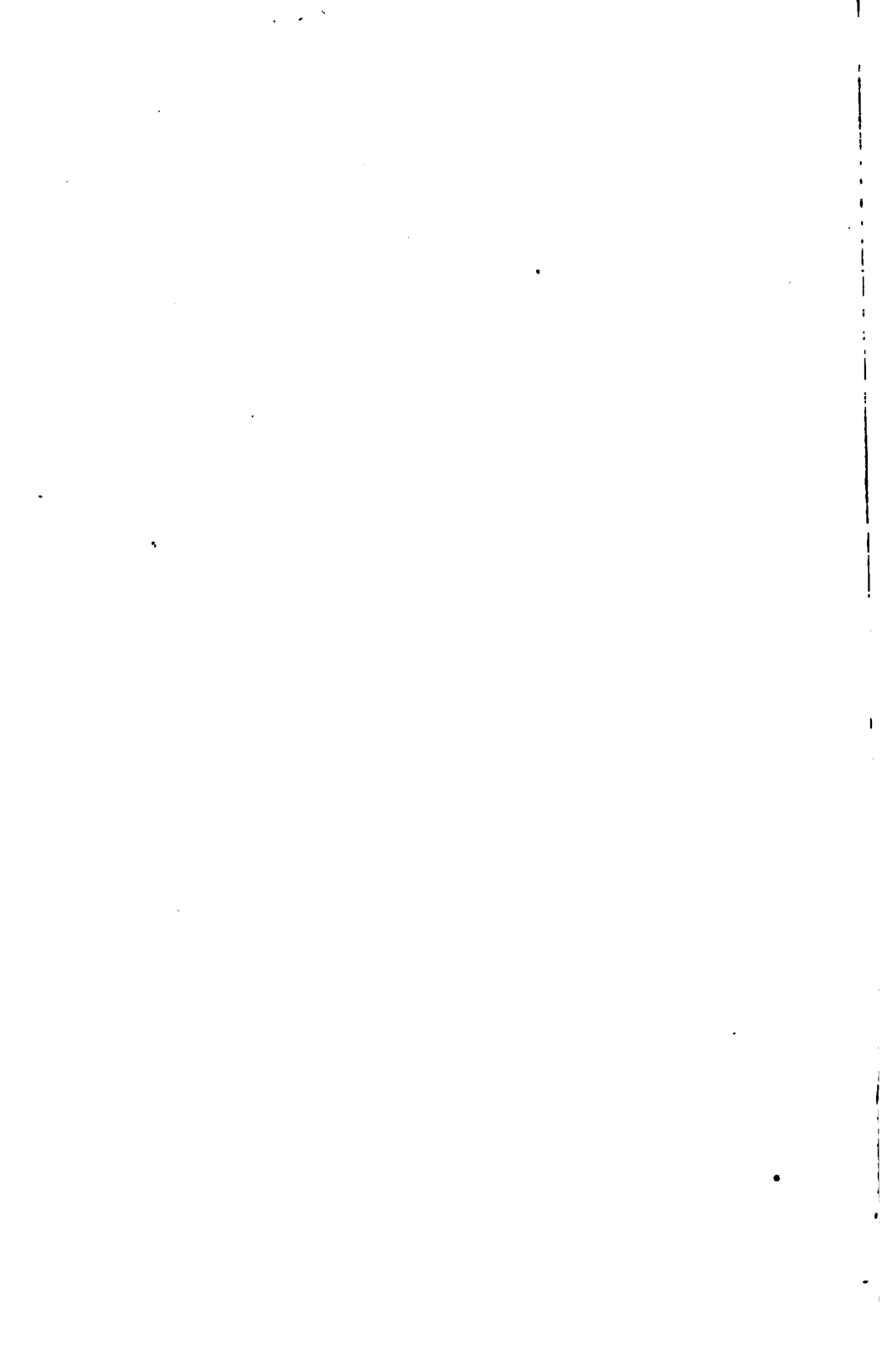
¹ Alabaster, *op. cit.* p. 113 *et seq.*



BRONZE BUDDHAS, KATAMAT PET
FROM WAT FICHAIWAT, BANGKOK



STONE IMAGE OF BUDDHA
FROM PRA PRANG SAM YOT, LOPBURI



images dating from this time and representing the Buddha in the attitude of contemplation are very often of the type known as Katamat Pet, that is, with the legs so crossed that the up-turned soles of both feet are visible. The pedestal upon which the Buddha sits is ornamented with a lotus petal design, and the strap of the robe which hangs over the left shoulder does not come below the breast. The modelling of arms and hands is very graceful and some heads are really fine.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many objects besides images were cast in bronze, and in some the ornamentation is chased. The temple bells are heavy castings with bands of floral decoration, suspended from the hook by a highly ornamented shackle, but the deep-toned gongs which are common throughout Siam were hammered into shape.

The Shan war drums were made of cast bronze and ornamented at four equidistant points with frogs. The number of frogs superimposed at each point indicated the rank of the man to whom the drum belonged.

The old currency consisted of bullet-shaped silver coins with a distinguishing mark of the reign to which they belonged stamped upon them. The bullet *ticals* were in circulation up to 1905, side by side with the new flat coins, but they have now been withdrawn. The bullet-shaped *salungs* ($\frac{1}{4}$ *ticals*) and *fuangs* ($\frac{1}{8}$ *ticals*) have been longer out of use, and the flat coins which have replaced them are generally bent to facilitate their collection by the croupiers at the gambling-houses. An attempt was once made to create a gold coinage, but these coins are now very rare and are only to be seen

in collections. For small change cowries were originally used, but copper tokens (*atts*) of a value of $\frac{1}{16}$ *tical*, have now taken their place. From the north come some very interesting old coins of silver and copper alloy, shaped like oyster shells. They formed no part of the actual currency but were used in payment of revenue taxes.

Iron was formerly worked by the natives in many parts of the country, and its use was probably known to the ancestors of the Siamese long before they migrated from the south-west provinces of China. Colonel Gerini mentions a temple in old Sukot'hai, dating from the thirteenth century A.D., built of square blocks of sandstone carefully fitted and clamped inside with iron. Iron was used for the blades of swords and the heads of spears, though as the iron was smelted over a charcoal fire it may often have been converted into steel.

Almost every prince has in his possession some very beautiful swords. These are treasures which do not often see the light of day, and you may search the shops in vain to procure their like. Yet sometimes they will be brought to your door and you may bargain for them with a middleman, for princes gamble like everyone else in Siam, and when ready money is no longer available they will dispose of some of their property. The blades of such swords as these are gracefully shaped, and the hafts are often solid pieces cut out of elephants' tusks, with heavy mounts fashioned of silver. Sometimes the ivory is beautifully carved, and the old workers were not content that their carving should rest lightly on the surface but penetrated to the very heart of the material.

Some of these swords are shown in the following illustration. The swords used in actual warfare were less ornamental but often far larger. One that I measured had a blade thirty inches in length, fitted to a plain haft of teak, eighteen inches long.

From the seventeenth century onward the blades were frequently damascened with a running pattern in gold or silver. Probably not so old is the practice of inlaying the back of the blade with small strips of silver, copper and brass. The jungle knives, which are still made at Ayuthia and elsewhere, are often inlaid in this way, and it is interesting to note that the blades are forged by women.

Very often the sides of the blade are channelled, and on many sword blades simple decorative patterns and inscriptions are cut.

The Laos covered the hafts and sheaths of their swords with a thin sheet of silver, ornamented with bands of plaited silver wire.

The wavy blades of the Malay krisses were made of many laminations of iron or steel, of different degrees of hardness, welded together and afterwards treated with acid which brought out the structure, producing a watered pattern. The handle, of carved wood or ivory, originally represented a crouching demon, but later this became conventionalised into a bird-like form.¹ The commonest type is of polished wood, with a short beak set in a different plane to the blade, and in its general lines a likeness can still be traced to the demon. Sometimes the carved head is more elaborate, and the beak is greatly accentuated and made of copper,

¹ In the British Museum this figure is called "the god Arvana." It bears a strong likeness to a Javanese image of Rama.

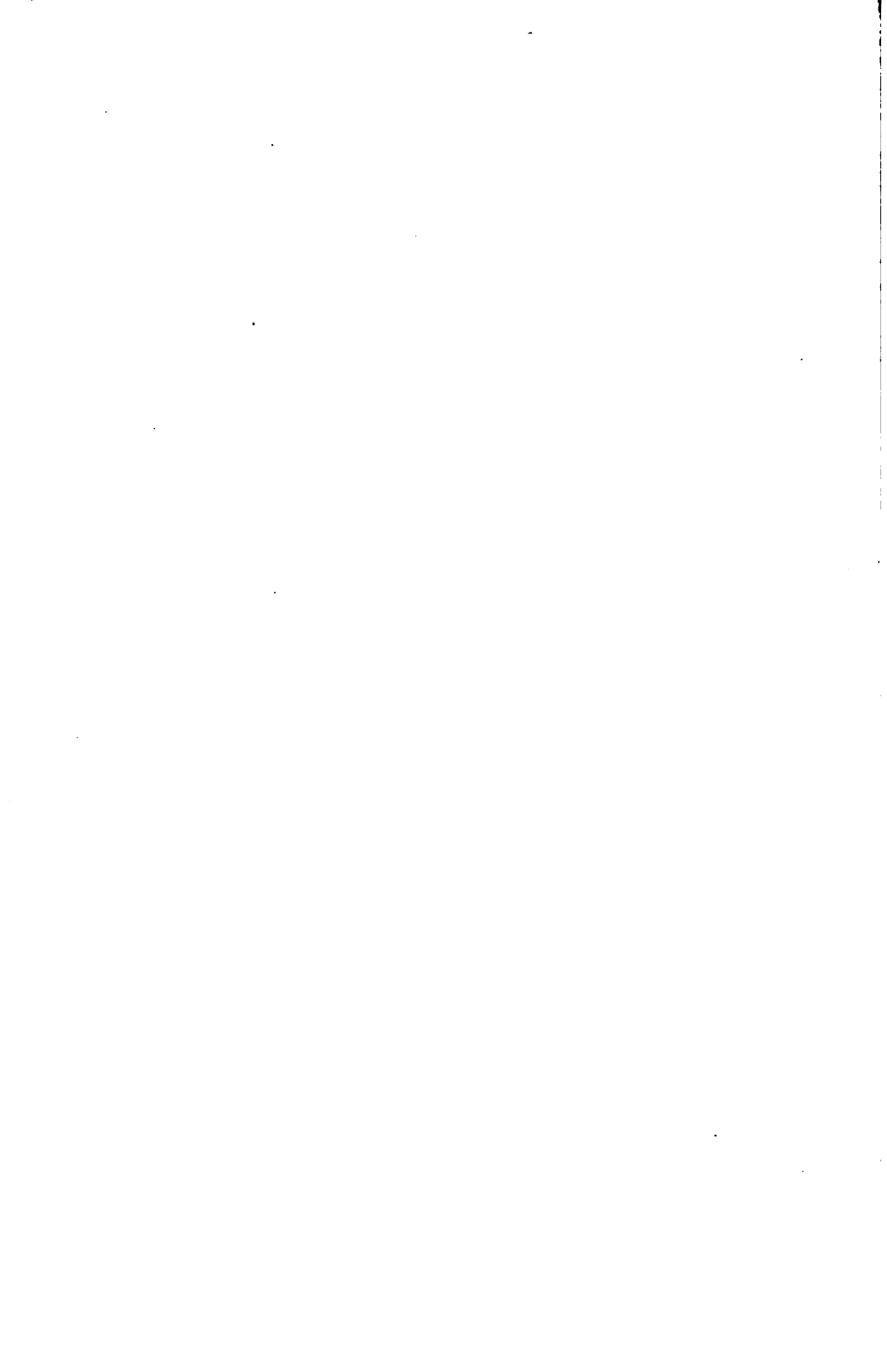
but a feature of the original figure is still preserved in the short curling tusks. On every kriss a very interesting survival of ornament is found in the small projections from either edge of the blade, near its base. On one edge there is a single well-marked projection, similar in shape to the roof terminal of a temple building, and this was originally part of the head of a Naga, whose body, embossed and damascened in gold, ran down the centre of the blade. The irregular projections from the other edge are the remains of a foliated pattern which may be seen, damascened in gold, upon some ancient krisses.

A typical Siamese spear is about seven feet long, with a shaft of bamboo, tapering from the head. Below the head, the shaft fits into a long iron mount with a lotus form of decoration in relief, the raised lines being damascened with silver. The best bamboos are those in which the joints are very close together, so that they taper rapidly, and when, in addition, they are of a good rich colour and finely polished, they are highly prized. Light weapons of this kind were used as javelins.

Another form of weapon consisted of a curved blade mounted upon a shaft of wood. Sometimes the back of the blade is deeply notched and sometimes it is provided with a hook, which gives it a most formidable appearance. These weapons were intended for slashing at an opponent and they were carried by the warriors who rode to battle upon elephants. The foot-soldiers were provided with terrific weapons of a similar type, for the purpose of disabling the elephants by stabbing them from underneath.



SPEARS, SWORDS, AND FIDDLES
FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION, ONE-FOURTEENTH FULL SIZE



Ceremonial spears had shafts of wood, of equal diameter throughout, encased in tubes of copper gilt. Below the head was a bulb of metal-work, fretted and studded with gems, and from this a great tassel of horse-hair depended. When the King sat in council one of these spears was held upright on either hand behind his throne.

The Laos had lances eight or nine feet in length. The shaft, of wood, tapers to the head, and it was often ornamented with bands of silver. It is said that these lances were used in tournaments and that the champions of two conflicting armies rode against each other before the hosts joined battle, as in the days of chivalry. Ceremonial Lao spears were entirely cased in silver and ornamented with bulbs.

The Cambodians used a weapon consisting of a bamboo shaft with a crook to which a short straight blade was attached, having somewhat the appearance of a bayonet carried on a rifle. Unlike the bayonet the edge and not the point was used, and it was in reality a light axe with a long handle. This weapon is shown in the bas-reliefs at the Nakawn Wat and there, too, we see bows and arrows and chariots.¹ The bows shown at Nakawn are four or five feet in length.

The Siamese used a straight bow of bamboo, strung with strips of the same material, and also cross-bows, from which they fired both arrows and bullets. These bows were drawn to the notch by the united exertions of feet and arms. I have not, however, come across a single example of this weapon, and the only bows that are now in use are the small straight bows with which boys

¹ See illustration facing p. 292.

amuse themselves by firing pellets of clay at birds. They are doubly strung with rattan, and fastened to the strings is a small piece of basket-work on which the pellet is held, and fired as from a catapult.

Soon after the Siamese descended to their present habitation they learnt the use of gunpowder, probably from the Chinese. The potassium nitrate required for its manufacture was for many centuries obtained from the deposits of bat guano in the caves of the limestone hills at Lopburi, Prabat, and elsewhere. The foot-soldiers carried matchlocks, and swivel guns were mounted on the war elephants. At the old capital, Ayuthia, there may still be seen some cast iron wall-pieces of enormous thickness. In the museum at Bangkok there are some very large bronze guns, or rather mortars, with inscriptions in the Cambodian character inlaid in silver. It is said that they came from the Malay States, but whether they were made there or not I do not know. Whoever made them must have possessed a large and powerful lathe, for some of them are of fourteen inches bore and excellently turned.

From the twelfth or thirteenth century A.D. the art of making "Niello" ware flourished at Ligor, the modern Nakawn Sri Tamarat, in the Malay Peninsula, and lasted until the middle of the eighteenth century. This ware is made of silver. The vessel is filled with cutch and the pattern is traced upon it with a graver. The ground is then hammered down, leaving the ornament in low relief. Then it is inlaid with "Niello," which brings the ground up to the level of the ornamentation, so that the outer surface of the vessel is smooth and the



SIAMESE NIELLO WARE
FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION, ONE-FIFTH FULL SIZE



designs appear in silver upon a black ground. In the oldest pieces the ware was left in this state, but later it became the fashion to gild the silver, so that the outer surface was black and gold. In some of the best examples both gilding and the natural colour of the silver are employed in the designs with great effect. The interior of the vessel was always left plain, and the reflex of the design shows through upon it.

The black ground or "Niello" filling was prepared by melting together in a crucible, lead, silver, copper and sulphur. The resultant black mass, consisting of metallic sulphides of the three metals, was powdered and fused into the hollows of the vessel, using borax as a flux.

A similar method of decoration was practised in Persia, whence it was introduced into Russia, and in Italy the art was known as early as the ninth century A.D. In these countries, however, the pattern appears to have always been engraved in the metal, whereas in Siam it was hammered.

Favourite figures on the old bowls were the mythical monsters Rachasi and Kochasi, who long ago lived on the earth, but when they saw how men rode the horse and the elephant they became afraid that they too would be ridden, so they fled to the Himalayan fairyland. More modern pieces were generally covered with a formal leafy design, and less and less of the black background became visible. "Niello" ware is still made to a very limited extent, but the patterns have become coarser and the gilding is in larger masses than in the old work.

Most of the modern silver-ware is made by

Chinese, and it is ornamented with *repoussé* work, without inlay or gilding. The Burmese "Cutch" ware is also imitated in Siam. The Laos make silver boxes with a characteristic decoration of knobs covering the lids. In the Malay States the natives make very beautiful belts of plaited silver wire, an art which they learnt from the Chinese.

In the Royal palace and the houses of the great nobles are many vessels made of pure gold, of a rich red tint. Others are made of an alloy of gold and copper, and sometimes the gold is stained with crimson tamarind dye. Sapphires and rubies are found in the district of Pailin, and at Chantabun on the coast. It is noticeable that the gems are worked by Burmese and Shans, whilst the tin mines in the Malay States, the only mining of any importance in Siam, is in the hands of the Chinese.

The Siamese are passionately fond of jewellery, and often carry all their wealth about them in the shape of a valuable ring. The richer classes, however, do not display that excess of jewellery which is characteristic of Indian princes, and in fact they are very simple in their dress. Yet in its rich simplicity no garment could excel the *panung*. It was once the fashion to wear a different *panung* on each day of the week, each day having its appropriate colour, but now the selection is left to the taste of the wearer, and reds, greens, and purples, all shot with gold, mingle together, so that a Siamese crowd is full of changing colour. The most beautiful silks are not displayed for sale in the markets. To find them we must go through narrow passages and under low doorways, into the little houses which lie far back from the main

streets, where the girls sit at their looms, and there, after we have drunk many little cups of tea, they will show us of their best. A good deal of the raw silk is imported, but the silkworm is also cultivated with considerable success in Siam. Formerly *panungs* were made with a white centre and a deep border of purple or red, embroidered with gold thread, and sometimes the whole *panung* was embroidered. A certain amount of embroidery is still done in the palace, but the *panungs* now worn are always plain. On state occasions the great officials wear with the *panung* a silk coat of some dark colour, with a bold pattern in gold woven upon it. The King and many of the princes appear, as a rule, in simple uniforms.

Malay *sarongs* are worn by coolies in public, and by all classes in the privacy of their homes, but the gay tartans are far less artistic than the national *panung*. Silk *sarongs* are imported from China, but the best come from Kelantan in the Malay Peninsula. They may be readily distinguished by the small rough ends of silk which project from the material.

There is nothing that a Siamese enjoys more than watching the *lakhon* or theatrical performance, which to his mind forms the most important part of every entertainment. A *lakhon* consists of a series of spectacular effects, as gorgeous as the means of the donor of the feast will allow. The scenes are interminably long, and the story, taken from Burmese and Javanese legends, requires several days to unfold, for, as in our own musical comedies, songs and dances continually interrupt the action of the play. But a Siamese dance is as stately as a minuet. Each dancer, standing in her

place, goes through a rather graceful series of gestures with her hands, and bends her fingers into impossible positions. Perhaps she slowly draws up one foot, but no sudden movement is permitted. Only towards the end the music quickens and they all run round the stage once or twice. The music is restful and not unpleasing, save at the end of the quick movement, when the man in charge of the drum atones for his previous neglect, and the sheep-skin is tested to the bursting point. Compared with the clashing cymbals, violent gestures and screeching accents of a Chinese theatre we can have nothing but praise for the *lakhon*. In some performances, called *ee-kays*, only men and boys take part, and in their dancing they appear to be no less supple than the girls.

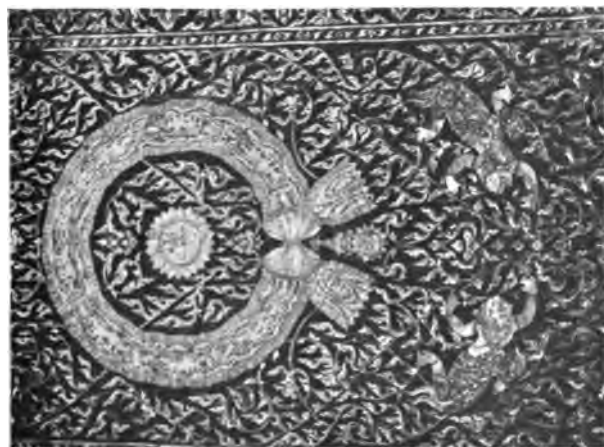
The performers enhance their beauty by whitening their faces and wearing immensely long artificial nails, which curve back until they nearly touch the wrists. Even in real life the Siamese allow their nails to grow until they project for an inch or more. After a little Siamese girl has been taken to see a *lakhon* we may be sure that her ambition is to become a prima donna, and to this end she often practices. It is a quaint sight to see a tiny maiden, dressed in a pair of ear-rings and a necklace, gravely going through the complicated movements all by herself. The dramatic instinct is strongly developed amongst the Siamese, and they are not without ability to play a sustained rôle. Not long ago an adaptation of *La Poupée* was played with great humour at the private theatre of the Minister of Agriculture, and more recently they have, with greater ambition, attempted *The School for Scandal*.



LACQUER PANEL
THE GIRL-FRUIT TREE
FROM WAT CHANG, BANGKOK



BLACK LACQUER PANEL
WITH GILDED FIGURES
FROM WAT SUTAT, BANGKOK



BLACK LACQUER PANEL WITH INLAID
MOTHER-OF-PEARL
FROM WAT RAJOPHITR, BANGKOK



The music of the Siamese is not written, but is learned by ear and handed down traditionally. It is not possible to represent their airs by our notation with absolute accuracy, for their scale is radically different from our own. The ideal Siamese scale is an equal division of the octave into seven parts, and each interval therefore consists of $1\frac{5}{7}$ semitones.¹

In an open-air band the conductor sits within a large circular frame, from which are suspended small gongs of different tones. On either hand are the *ranats*, or harmonicons, consisting of strips of bamboo strung upon a sort of cradle, and tuned by small weights stuck upon them with wax. The cradles are sometimes beautifully inlaid with ivory. When, in the *lakhon*, an actor begins to sing, the conductor softly follows the first long-drawn-out notes until he hits upon the correct key. This he gives to the rest of the band, and then the liquid notes of the *ranats* join in.

In the full band which plays at a rich man's house on great occasions there are also stringed instruments. The oldest of these are the viols, which are very similar to those used in Persia. The belly of the instrument is made of the dried outer rind of a cocoanut, covered with fish-skin, upon which is fastened a piece of coloured cut glass, "serving apparently to quench the inharmonic proper tones of the membrane."² The foot is often of turned ivory and the neck, also of ivory, is enriched with "Niello" work, or inlaid mother-of-pearl. There is no finger-board. The three strings are of silk cord

¹ Parry, *Art of Music*, p. 43.

² Mr. Ellis, quoted by Mr. F. W. Verney in *Notes on Siamese Musical Instruments*, p. 21.

and the bow is strung with horse-hair. Then there are the small fiddles of a Chinese pattern, with two strings and a belly which looks like the bowl of a pipe. These are sometimes made entirely of ivory. Another instrument, called "the alligator," is essentially the same as the Burmese instrument of the same name though, unlike it, bearing a very distant resemblance to the animal. In this the strings are plucked with an ivory plectrum.

The Laos have a very beautiful reed instrument, called the *ken*. It consists of fourteen pipes symmetrically arranged, and a small air-chamber and mouthpiece of turned wood or ivory. A metal plate having a tongue is inserted in a slit in each pipe, and the joints between the pipes and the air-chamber are stopped with wax. The pipes themselves are made of hollow reeds. I have seen a *ken* that measured twelve feet in length, but such an instrument as this would require exceptionally powerful lungs, and the usual length is under seven feet. The tone is peculiarly sweet and chords can be produced upon it.



▲ TAYPANOM

CHAPTER VIII

RICE AND FISH

"When working paddy fields don't omit the canal for irrigation ;
When in town don't neglect the dignitaries."

Siamese Proverb.

THERE are two ways of going up country from Bangkok : the river and the railway. By the latter we can reach Paknam Po in about seven hours, but if our destination is far from the line it will probably be easier, and will certainly be more comfortable, to travel in a house-boat towed by a launch. All our cooking is done on the launch, and at meal-times the tow rope is pulled in so that our boys can step across from the launch on to the boat. For the rest of the day we can lie in long chairs beneath the awnings and observe the country.

The best time of year for travelling by river is in January. The rains are over but the water is still high, and the launch can go into small *klongs* where a few weeks later it would stick hopelessly, so that we should be obliged to cast loose and row. We shall see the rice boats coming down the river, so laden with grain that their great painted eyes skim level with the surface. The boats are covered amidships with a rounded roof of attap, whilst at either end Chinamen tug at the oars under mat awnings, and over all the great sails of white or

blue swell into graceful curves. Huge rafts of teak logs drift lazily down stream, with little red and white flags fluttering over them. Their crews live in attap huts, and at either end are half-a-dozen rough paddles by means of which they can creep in to the bank when the tide turns. They are scarce slower than the strings of empty rice boats, two or even three abreast, and stretching over five hundred yards, towed painfully up against the current by tiny launches.

It must be remembered that over the greater portion of the delta the rivers are tidal, for though the salt water does not often run up as far as Bangkok, the momentum of the tidal wave causes the rivers to ebb and flow even above the old capital, Ayuthia. In the network of canals which crosses from one river to another the currents are very complicated, for in some branches the water will be rising whilst in others it is running out. The currents are strong and the larger boats never try to row against them, but tie up and wait until the tide turns.

As we leave behind us the rows of floating houses the banks are at first fringed with a dense growth of trees, but farther away from Bangkok the walls of living green disappear—except for an occasional clump of bamboos—and from the brimming river we look out over the brown level country. Nothing breaks the flat monotony save here and there a lonely group of toddy palms, with often a solitary outlying sentinel. In the still brazen heat the quivering horizon scarce divides the silver sky from the river of molten silver which slides along beneath us. Under the fierce glare of the midday

sun every hue is pallid, but with the first cool breath of evening the green of the banks takes depth, and the lighter green of the bamboos is touched with gold. Then as the sun sets the filmy clouds grow opalescent, and near the horizon a band of purple shows through the green tracery, while in the west the palms grow black against the orange sky. In the shadows under the bamboos tiny sparks waver over the water, as the fire-flies weave their way in and out amongst the overhanging branches. On some trees they cluster thickly, and all show their light and again extinguish it with one accord at regular intervals, so that the whole tree seems to pulsate with the sparkling light. I know of no more beautiful sight than to see these fiery trees flash out from the dark banks, while far away the summer lightning flickers on the clouds. Then, rising above the horizon, the moon shows redly through the mist, but as it mounts higher it floods all the country with its pure light.

We have left the main stream and are travelling westward, through the small rivers which spread over all the district of Ayuthia. Soon we are plunged in darkness, for once more the banks are clothed with overhanging trees, through whose branches the moonbeams filter and make pools of light upon the water. Now and then we swing sharply aside to avoid some fishing boat, anchored in mid stream. We can dimly see her, with two long bamboos dipping over the stern like the antennæ of some monstrous water-beetle. Sometimes we see the crew toiling at a windlass, and as the bamboo frame rises slowly out of the black water a net comes up, dripping and glistening with fish.

Presently a deeper blackness on the banks marks the position of a grove of large trees. Here is a monastery, and here we tie up for the night, and sleep if the continual plop! plop! of rising fish will allow us to do so. With the falling of dusk the mosquitoes come out, and directly we stop they will make their presence felt. Up here they are not so bad as on the muddy banks near the coast, and they appear to be much more locally distributed. In some places they are intolerable, whilst in others, only a few miles away, it is unnecessary to use a mosquito net during the dry season.

Very early in the morning we are awakened by the intoning of the monks, and we may see some late comer returning in his small canoe from the begging round. The village *wat* is very simple. There are the houses for the monks and the *sala*, or rest-house, and perhaps there is a little *bawt*, but often the *sala* serves also as the *bawt*. When we have been up country longer we shall know these *salas* well. Along the river banks the *wats* are dotted at frequent intervals, and we could travel from one end of the country to the other and always find at night a roof over our heads, and a dry floor raised off the ground. The posts and the floor are of teak, and the red-tiled roof comes low down, giving protection from the sun and rain, but the sides are quite open. Within the *sala* is a pulpit from which the monks read during a cremation. One or two banners painted with scenes from the sacred books depend from the rafters, and flocks of pigeons roost inside the roof. Along one side of the *sala* is a raised platform, and at one end is a little image of the Buddha.



A SALA



On the morning of a festival the monks sit upon this platform, with downcast eyes and hands folded on their laps. The head of the monastery, sitting nearest to the Buddha, repeats the commandments, holding a fan before his face that his thoughts may not be distracted by the pretty faces of the girls who kneel upon the floor of the *sala* before him. I remember a *sala* filled with kneeling women and children, murmuring the words after the monk, and there were present two Europeans, one kneeling devoutly also but apart, who looked to the Christ and not to the Buddha, while the other, indifferent alike to both faiths, sat at his camp-table and with scant reverence proceeded to devour his morning eggs and bacon. Such actions give no offence, for the monks are very tolerant. But their curiosity will know no bounds, and first they will want to know what we are doing, and next the amount of our salaries, for it is polite to show a friendly interest in us.

Behind the *wat* we come at once to open country, level to the horizon, where a hazy line of bamboos marks the course of another branch of the river, and in the dry months the ground is cracked and bare, or covered only with the paddy stubble. Here and there we see a yellow gleam from the roof of some distant homestead, but we shall come to few villages except upon the river banks, or where on a patch of slightly higher ground a grove of large trees forms an oasis in the scorching plain.

If we are going any distance we must take a string of coolies with us—several to carry water-bottles, one to carry tiffin, one to carry an umbrella and then others, with more water-bottles. It would

be "oppressive" to give any coolie more than one thing to carry, and besides, a European without four or five attendants would be considered an anomaly. We may contrast the practice of our coolies, who always walk in single file over these boundless plains, with the attempts of a party of Englishmen to walk abreast down a narrow lane.

We shall not get very far without hearing some old man, two or three fields away, excitedly shouting "*Nai! Nai korap!*" (*Sahib*). Perhaps, if we have not been in the country very long, we may turn aside and go up to him, for he really seems to want something, but it is only to ask where the *Nai* is going.

Everywhere the people are friendly. They are pleased when we go up into their houses, and bring us tea and give our coolies betel to chew. As yet no tourists have come to spoil them by making payment for that which is a pure act of hospitality. Sometimes indeed their sense of what is due to us exceeds the resources of their household. A friend of mine was once visiting the head man of the village in which he had made his camp. He was asked what he would have to drink, and to his surprise, beer, whisky-and-soda, and champagne, were casually mentioned. He asked for beer, and after a short delay a most excellent bottle of Bass was produced. When my friend returned to camp, his boy told him that the head man had sent round and borrowed the Bass. My friend felt that his moderation had been its own reward, for his stock of champagne was strictly limited.

With all their friendliness the people are independent too. The villages swarm with chickens, but in many places our cook will tell us that he

cannot buy them. Perhaps the villagers are averse to let us have them because they know that we kill them ; yet I do not think that this enters very much into their minds. They have no need of money and they do not like parting with their possessions. A pretty instance of this feeling is given by Mr. Warrington Smyth, who tells how he once tried to buy a pony for which he offered far more than its value, but the owner refused to part with it saying that it was like the cat, and he felt sure that the children would cry if he sold it. The Siamese pony is indeed a most domesticated animal, for when the country is flooded it is led up an inclined plane on to the platform of the house, and lives with the family.

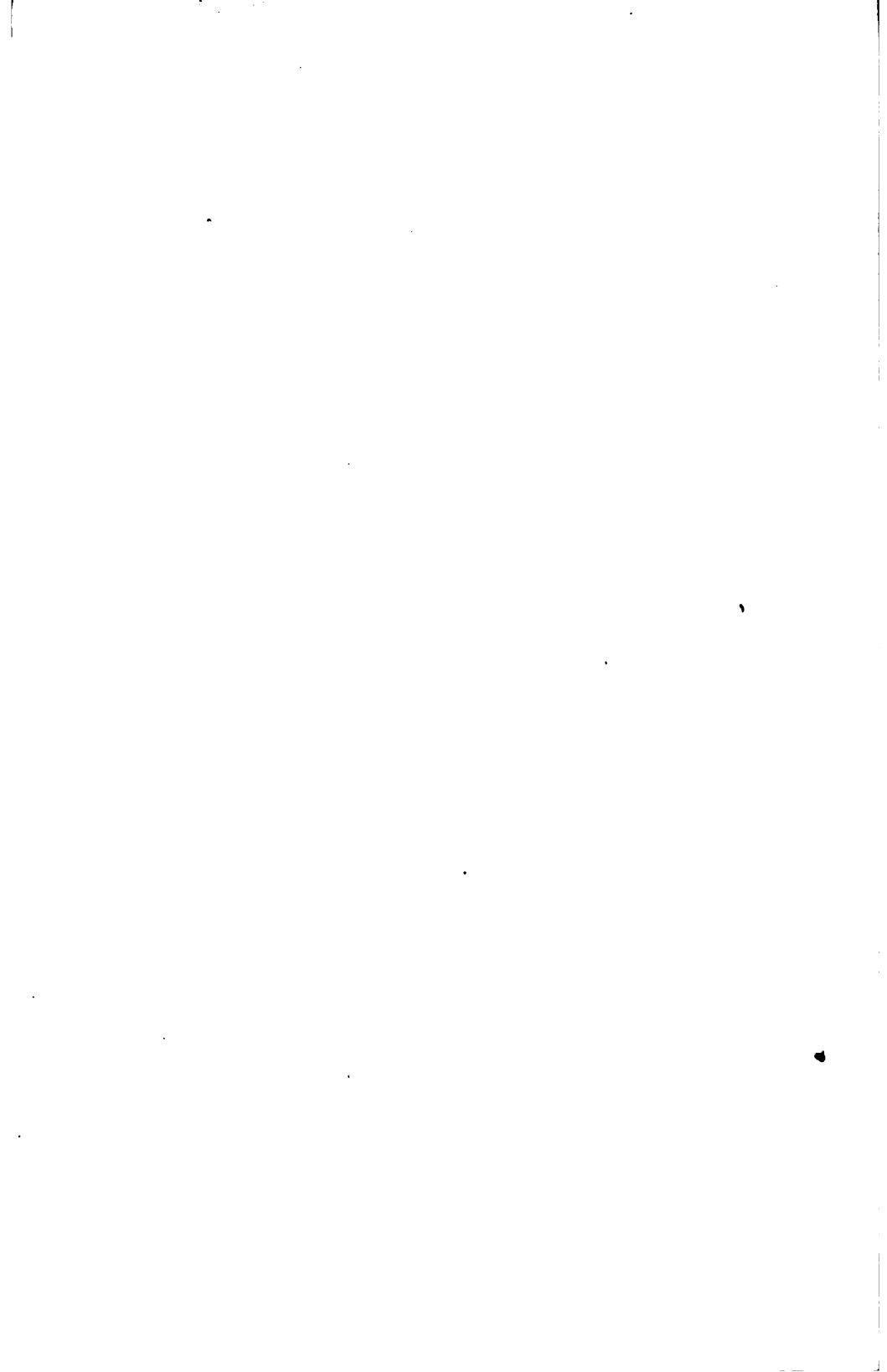
If we want to hire boats or carts we are often met with similar reluctance. We approach the matter too directly, and we too readily assume that the local officials will be impressed by the Government *kras* which we carry, and which order them to render us any assistance that is in their power. If possible it is better to leave the matter to one of our own Siamese, if he be a man of good position. Let us see how he manages the business. He sends for the Kamnun, the head man of the village, and awaits him sitting in a *sala*. When the Kamnun arrives he ignores his presence for some minutes, but at length turns towards him and asks him if he is the Pu Yai Ban, the head man of a hamlet, of course a lower official. The Kamnun is sitting on his heels, for he will not stand while the great man sits, lest he should slight him by holding his head on a higher level. He makes a reverence with his joined hands and proclaims his official posi-

tion, after which another silence ensues. Presently our friend jerks out another question, asking this time if he can read, and on being answered in the affirmative he places his *kra* in the Kamnun's hands, telling him to read that. Now the Kamnun's education has long been neglected and he is not a little rusty in his letters, so asking permission to go to his house and get his spectacles he takes the *kra* to a monk, and gets it read to him. Thus introduced it will produce a great effect, and he will come back prepared to grant anything that our man wants. Business thus satisfactorily settled, our representative will drop his pompous manners, and before long he and the Kamnun are chewing betel nut together and retailing all the news of the district.

As I have already stated, the country is very far from being fully developed, and indeed it is probable that not more than one-half of the delta of the Menam is now under cultivation. Theoretically the whole land belongs to the King, but any man can go into the jungle and burn off the long grass and bamboo scrub, and so clear for himself a space in which to plant his rice. For this he pays nothing except the annual land tax, and if he likes he can claim the land henceforth as his own. If, on the other hand, he prefers to clear a new patch of jungle and abandon his old clearing, he can do that also, and pay the tax each year on just so much land as he cultivates. Naturally the land along the river banks is the first to be taken up, and so the rivers are always bordered by a strip which has long been cultivated, and in which there are well-marked divisions between neighbouring properties. In some places this strip of cultivation is quite narrow, but in



A KLONG WITH BAMBOOS



others it extends for many miles in from the banks, and where the river divides into many branches the whole country is cultivated.

By far the greater number of Siamese are small freeholders, cultivating on an average about eight acres, which are sufficient to support a family of four or five in comfort. In the neighbourhood of Bangkok many large properties are owned by princes and great officials, who sublet it to small tenant farmers. These great land-owners, however, do not live upon their estates, preferring to attend the court and enjoy the pleasures of the capital, so as we journey through the country we shall see none but peasantry, save at the few large villages in which are situated the offices and residences of the local Governors, and the High Commissioners of the provinces.

Sometimes each farmer lives on his own holding, but very often ten or twenty families will build close together, both for convenience and for mutual protection against dacoits, and these villages straggle all along the river banks. Those who live upon the river but whose fields lie far away, must put up little sheds of bamboo thatched with grass, in which they sleep out during the time of ploughing and sowing. In the dry season many of those who dwell far from the river are compelled to move and form temporary villages upon the river banks, for they depend on large pits which are filled with water during the rainy season, but which dry up under the fierce heat of the sun when the rains are over.

The districts far from the rivers are, however, the last to become parched, for in the country between

the main rivers the water is held as in a cup, and unless there are cross canals to drain it away it is retained until it eventually disappears by evaporation. The cross canals connecting the main rivers are therefore of the greatest importance. Without them these vast intermediate districts are valueless, for the water stands too long upon them for rice to be grown successfully, and even were it possible to grow the rice it could only be used for local consumption, since the difficulty of transport would prevent it from being sent to Bangkok. In the days of Siam's greatness her rulers took care to cut canals, but in more recent times many of the old water-ways have been allowed to silt up. At low tide in some districts these canals form happy hunting-grounds for dacoits, who attack the rice boats when they are stuck helplessly in the mud. Of late years, however, a more progressive policy has been followed. A company has obtained a large concession of land which they have opened up by the cutting of canals and, as I pointed out in a previous chapter, the danger is now that in developing the great resources of the country they will outrun the powers of its population, and give undue encouragement to the flow of Chinese immigration.

The low-lying land near the coast is flooded at high tide, and salt is obtained by evaporating the water retained by the banks that surround the fields. North of the salt marshes is a district where the water is brackish, and although some rice is grown there it is of very poor quality. The district is, however, covered with a thick growth of stunted trees, which are valuable as fire-wood. Still farther north are the rice fields. From Pechaburi in the

west to the Bangpakong river we can travel by canals that pass through a broad belt of cultivation. Beyond this zone the cultivation extends along the banks of the rivers. The canal company's concession lies between the Menam and the Bangpakong river and the whole of this district is one great rice field.

The method of growing rice in Siam is that sanctioned by immemorial custom. It is said that the present cultivators are even more careless than their forefathers, and that in consequence the quality of the rice is deteriorating. Whether or not that is the case, there can be no doubt that by scientific crossing the rice might be greatly improved, whilst by artificial irrigation two crops might be raised in the year instead of one.¹

During the dry months the farmers clear fresh ground, and at night the light of the jungle fires may be seen in many directions, whilst by day great clouds of light brown smoke drift across the horizon. In April the first showers fall. A shadow falls over the land, there is a sudden chill, and the wind rises until it blows with the force of a hurricane. Then we see the rain advancing towards us like a sheet of steel, roaring upon the palm-leaves as it comes. The next moment it is upon us, spouting in torrents from the eaves of the houses and lashing the river to sudden foam, while the crashing of thunder is almost incessant. At night the trees are silhouetted against blinding flashes of lightning, and as the storm recedes we see flashes which run horizontally, others which leap from the earth, and some which seem to make complete circles in the sky. It is gone as

¹ A small first crop is actually raised on irrigated land, and reaped in May or June.

quickly as it came, leaving naught to remind us of its passing save a freshened feeling in the air, and the chorus of croaking bull-frogs which it has wakened into life. Sometimes the storm may pass us by. I have seen at midday a black sweep of rain, a few degrees in width, which travelled round the whole horizon, while all the rest of the land was sunlit.

By June enough rain has fallen to make the ground soft, and the farmers begin their ploughing. There is no sudden rise of the river, and even in the intermediate districts, of which I have spoken, the cross canals do not overflow the surrounding country until later in the year. The plough is a primitive implement with a wooden share which turns a shallow furrow, and it is drawn by two of the great water-buffaloes. After the ploughing a harrow is dragged over the fields and so the surface is reduced to slushy mud.

Two methods of planting the rice are practised. In places where the inundation is very deep it is simply scattered broadcast on the fields. Very soon it sprouts, and the whole land shimmers with the tender green of the young rice. As the water rises the rice grows up at the same pace, always keeping its head above the surface. About the beginning of December it is ripe, and the people row out in boats and canoes and reap it, plunging their arms beneath the surface to cut as much of the stalk as possible. Frames are erected in the fields, and over these the rice is hung in bundles to dry, just as in Norway they hang up the hay. Sometimes, when they think of it, boys climb up on little platforms and scare away the birds. They carry a long whip, and on the end of the lash



THE BEGINNING OF THE RAINS

To face page 176

they stick a pellet of mud which they are able to sling at the marauders with considerable accuracy. The long stalks of the rice which were left standing, form a tangled mat of straw upon the fields when the water goes down. In the dry months the farmers burn this off, and in every direction the horizon is obscured by the drifting clouds of smoke. As the straw smoulders away it leaves behind a charred expanse, where sudden whirlwinds catch up the embers and set them spinning over the blackened plain.

In places where the depth of the inundation is not so great a finer variety of rice is grown, known as garden rice. The rice is first sown thickly in little patches, very carefully prepared and watered. As the rice grows up these little patches gleam like emeralds amidst the muddy fields. When it is about a foot high it is pulled up, and planted out in the fields in little bundles. All the neighbours help in planting each other's fields, and many a flirtation is begun as the girls receive the bundles of rice from the young men, and press them down into the soft mud.

Sometimes in the early part of the season it is necessary to water the fields by artificial means. A basket, pitched inside and holding several gallons, is hung from a frame in such a way that by merely swinging it water is scooped from a *klong*, and flung upon the neighbouring fields. If a larger supply is needed, the water is raised by an endless string of wooden paddles, working in an inclined trough, and turned by two or three children on a treadmill. The fields are divided by mud ridges one or two feet in height. The main ridges always run at right angles to the river, and the depth of water can to some

extent be regulated by the cross ridges which connect them. In the less valuable districts, far from the rivers, where the inundation is usually deep and where it is not so important to mark the boundaries between the holdings, there are often no dividing ridges, and the farmers mutually agree how far each shall cultivate when they start ploughing. Generally the homesteads in these districts are so far apart that the lack of fixed boundaries is not productive of disputes.

When the rice is reaped and dried it is loaded on sledges and drawn to the homestead, where it is stacked around the threshing-floor of beaten earth. A windmill, consisting of a pole with a slip of wood pivoted at the top, is erected near by to scare away the birds, while the buffaloes are kept at a distance by tiny flags of white paper which flutter over the ricks. From the ricks the rice is taken to the threshing-floor, and in the centre is a pole, to which three or four buffaloes are tethered, side by side. Then with laughter and with shouting a small naked boy drives the great beasts round and round, twisting their tails and belabouring them with a hard ball of straw if they show signs of laziness, but never rebuking them if they stop to snatch a mouthful as they go, for in this kindly land they do not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. But at night is the best time of all, for what children would think of bed when they could roll in the straw and pelt each other by the light of great straw bonfires?

When at length the rice is all threshed out the farmer gives a feast to his neighbours. The rice is spread evenly over the threshing-floor, and the pole is decorated with a sheaf, whilst all around the straw

is piled up neatly and surrounded by a white thread, to keep evil spirits away.

The rice is winnowed by throwing up a spadeful in the air, so that the wind blows the chaff away, and it is then stored in great circular bins of cane plastered with mud. From these it is taken as it is required, and milled on the homestead itself. The rice mill consists of a block of wood with a hollow into which the grain is put, and a large wooden mallet with which the girls pound it. Sometimes the mallet is attached to the end of a long lever worked up and down by the girls stepping on and off its free end. When it has been pounded sufficiently the rice is taken out and placed on a wicker tray. This is held by a woman and jerked in a skilful manner, so as to throw the rice up and catch it again, and very soon the bran is all blown away, leaving the hulled grain.

If the farmer has more rice than is sufficient for the needs of his family during the year, the surplus must be sent in to Bangkok. Near Bangkok itself in addition to the larger *klongs* the country is divided by ditches, not more than four feet wide, and along these the rice is brought in long narrow dug-outs, paddled by a man at either end. Where there is no direct communication by water the rice must be loaded into carts and drawn to the nearest river. The carts are a picturesque feature of every homestead. The body is long and narrow, and the sides are simply bars of wood, inclining outward at the top. A few mats placed inside the cart prevent the rice from running out, and sometimes there is in addition a semicircular roof of matting. The huge wheels, six or seven feet in diameter, are set far

apart on an axle so slender that it seems impossible for it to bear the weight of the loaded cart, but by an ingenious system of bars the weight is distributed, and partly applied to a frame outside the wheels, thereby greatly lessening the chance of a breakdown. No iron is used in the construction of the cart, and the various parts are mortised into one another or lashed with rattan. The cart is drawn by a pair of water-buffaloes, guided by strings through their nostrils. They are not attached to the cart in any way, for the yoke simply rests on their necks. The yokes are generally cut out of wood, but some are made of bamboo trained to the proper curve. The occupation of growing these bamboo yokes enables a few typical Siamese to earn a living without suffering undue exertion.

Very early in the morning the farmer sets out with his string of carts, which bump and sway along rough tracks worn out over the caked surface, and when they come to the dividing ridge between two fields, deep ruts enable the wheels to pass through. If they have to ford a small *klong* the buffaloes will refuse to move out of the water until the farmer has splashed them all over, and in the heat of the day they must be allowed to rest. By that time, however, they have probably reached the river, and the rice is shot out of the carts on to a great heap under a thatched roof; and there the agents of the rice millers come to buy it and load it upon the rice boats. Then at evening, when the shadows of the bamboos are growing long, we hear far away across the fields a dreadful groaning and creaking, and presently amidst a cloud of dust we see the empty carts returning.

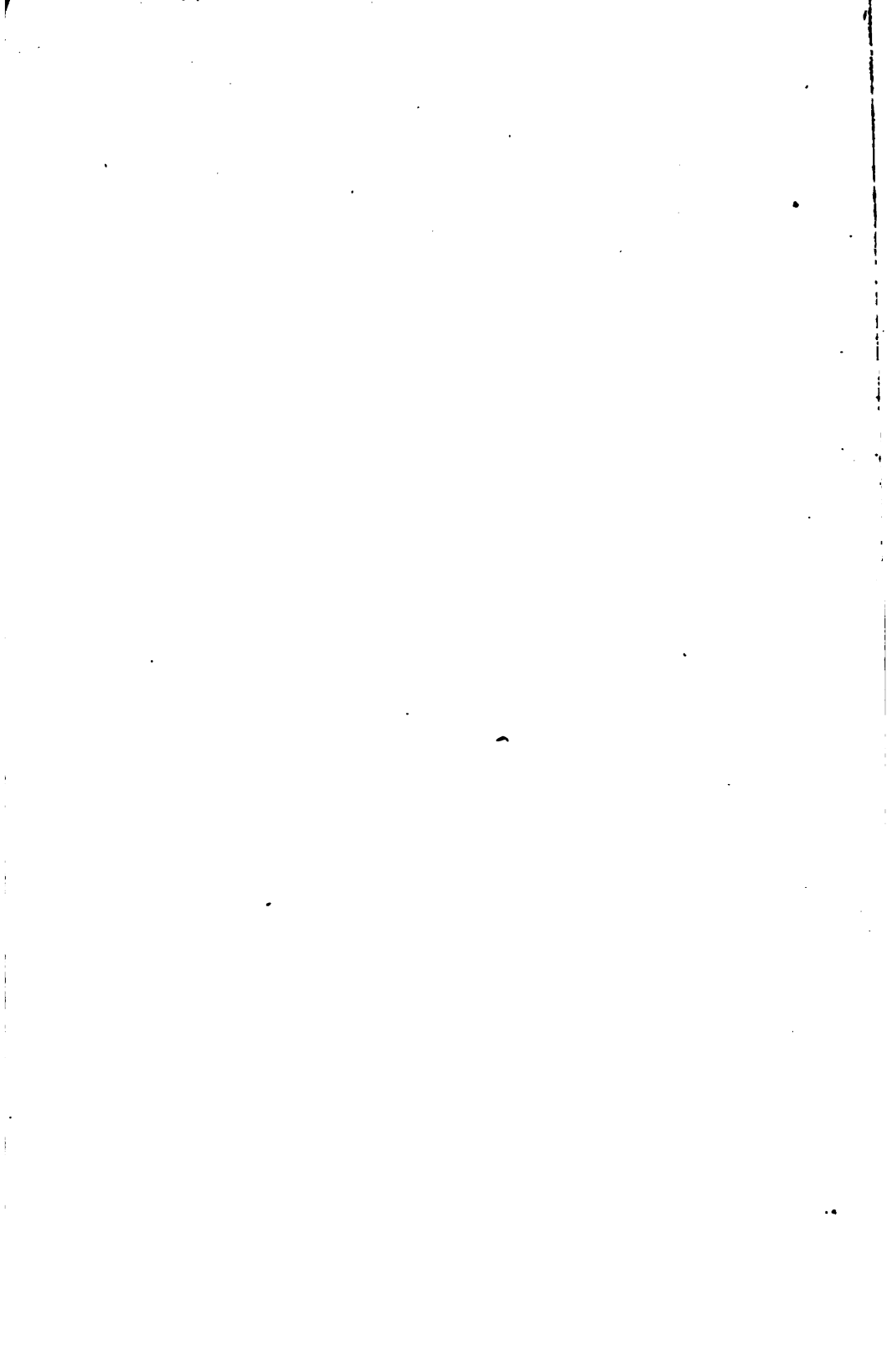


FLOUGHING WITH BUFFALDES



A BUFFALO CART

To face page 155



When all the rice has been sent away, work is over until the rains begin again, and the buffaloes are turned loose to graze upon the fields that have been left lying fallow during the preceding year.

Two varieties of the water-buffalo are found in Siam, the black and the white. They are formidable-looking beasts, with their immense spreading horns, which get very much in the way when they are yoked together. A pair of horns has been known to measure as much as eight feet six inches from tip to tip, measured round the curve. The buffaloes are unused to Europeans, and if we approach them they will face us, standing side by side, with heads thrown back so that their horns touch their backs. It is extremely rare for them to charge, though in the neighbouring French provinces they are said to be very dangerous. In Siam they appear soon to lose their fear of white men, and I have been on quite friendly terms with many buffaloes. At midday they wallow in pools of semi-liquid mud, nothing showing above the surface but their heads, and whilst they are grazing small white herons perch on their broad backs and glean a rich harvest. At night they are brought back to the homestead and shut in a pen. It is amusing to see the children run up to one of the huge beasts, and climbing on his back with the help of his tail—using the hock as a step—drive him home with shrill cries and many blows from their small fists, while the remainder of the herd follows meekly after.

Thus happily the Siamese farmer pursues his round with a minimum of toil, for year by year the rivers spread a fresh layer of rich mud over his fields. The value of good rice-land on the river

within easy reach of Bangkok is roughly £5 per acre. In the jungle, as I have said before, it can be had for nothing. The canal company to whom I have referred, were bound by the terms of their concession to sell the land which they opened up at the low price of 11s. 8d. an acre,¹ and large blocks were taken up by rich officials, and sublet at a great profit to small farmers. In addition to selling the land, the company are entitled to charge a toll upon all boats passing through the canal.

If the rice farmer elects to open up new ground he may be able himself to cut a *klong* into the jungle, in continuation of one already existing through the cultivated land. It is said that a *klong* six metres wide, and deep enough for the rice boats, can be cut at a cost of 2s. 4d. a metre. The buffaloes cost about £10 each, and on a big holding it is usual to allow a pair for every fourteen acres. On large farms regular labourers are employed to do the planting, instead of relying upon the more casual help of the neighbours. A farm-hand is engaged for a whole season for £5 and his food, which does not come to more than 5s. a month, and a good man will plant an acre in three days. Then there is the land tax to be paid. As to this two systems are in regular use side by side. Under the Ku-Ko system a tax of 8·75d. per acre is levied on all the land owned by the farmer, while under the Fang-Lawi system he pays 13·125d. per acre, but only on as much land as he actually has under cultivation each year.

¹ Four *ticals* per *rai*, or square *sen* of 40 metres. 2½ *rai* are thus about equal to one acre. It may be noted that the word *rai*, like our own word acre, originally meant simply an open ploughed or sowed field, before it became restricted to a definite measurement of area.

To compensate for the revenue lost by the closing of the provincial gambling-houses, a graduated land tax is now coming into force. In the best districts this tax amounts to as much as 2s. 11d. per acre, but there is still a large margin for profit. The farmers themselves estimate that they obtain a yield of about seventy bushels per acre, which at an average price means £3, 5s. per acre per annum.¹

In the thickly settled districts disputes of ownership are common, and here the work of the Survey Department is proving of the greatest service. The survey is connected with the Indian survey by means of a triangulation carried down through Burmah. From points whose positions have been fixed by this means, and checked by astronomical observations, traverses are run through the cultivated districts. For this part of the work Indian surveyors are at present employed, but it is hoped in time to substitute Siamese for them. When the rains render it impossible to continue the work any longer, the surveyors return to Bangkok, where the traverses are computed and set up. In the following year parties of Siamese surveyors, trained in the Survey School at Bangkok, proceed to the districts already traversed, and fill in the details by means of a simple chain survey, in open country, whilst in jungly country or garden-land sight-rules are used. When the survey is completed all the land-owners are called together, and each man points out the boundaries of his land in the presence of his neighbours. These boundaries are

¹ Or one cart-load (*kwien*) of 2000 litres from 2 *rai*, sold at 45 *ticals* per *kwien*. Similar land in Burmah is said to yield from 80 to 100 bushels per acre.

marked on the map and the holding is numbered. The owner then signs his name opposite a corresponding number in a list, and the Kamnun or some other local official signs as a witness. A very large number of small holdings are owned by women who are often unable to write, but all illiterate persons are allowed to make their thumb marks instead of signing the list. Disputed properties are marked with the names of the disputing parties. Copies of the maps and of the attested lists are afterwards handed to the Land Commissioner, who investigates all disputes, and has power to dispose summarily of those involving land of a value not greater than £9 (160 *ticals*), while more important cases are referred to the ordinary law courts. Those whose claim to the land is established receive a certificate which they can, in due course, exchange for a permanent title-deed. There are inevitable delays in the process, but meanwhile no later comers can dispossess them of the land. Thus land tenure is being placed on a secure basis.

The cost of the attested survey on a natural scale of $\frac{1}{1000}$ amounts to about £10 per square mile in open paddy-land, but in thick garden-land it may be three or four times as much.

From the point of view of the Government, the chief importance of the detailed survey lies in the fact that it will eventually form the basis on which to adjust the land tax, and a large increase of revenue may be expected from this source. At present the land tax is assessed by the local Kamnuns, who, as might be expected, are not always infallible. Moreover, under the cumbrous

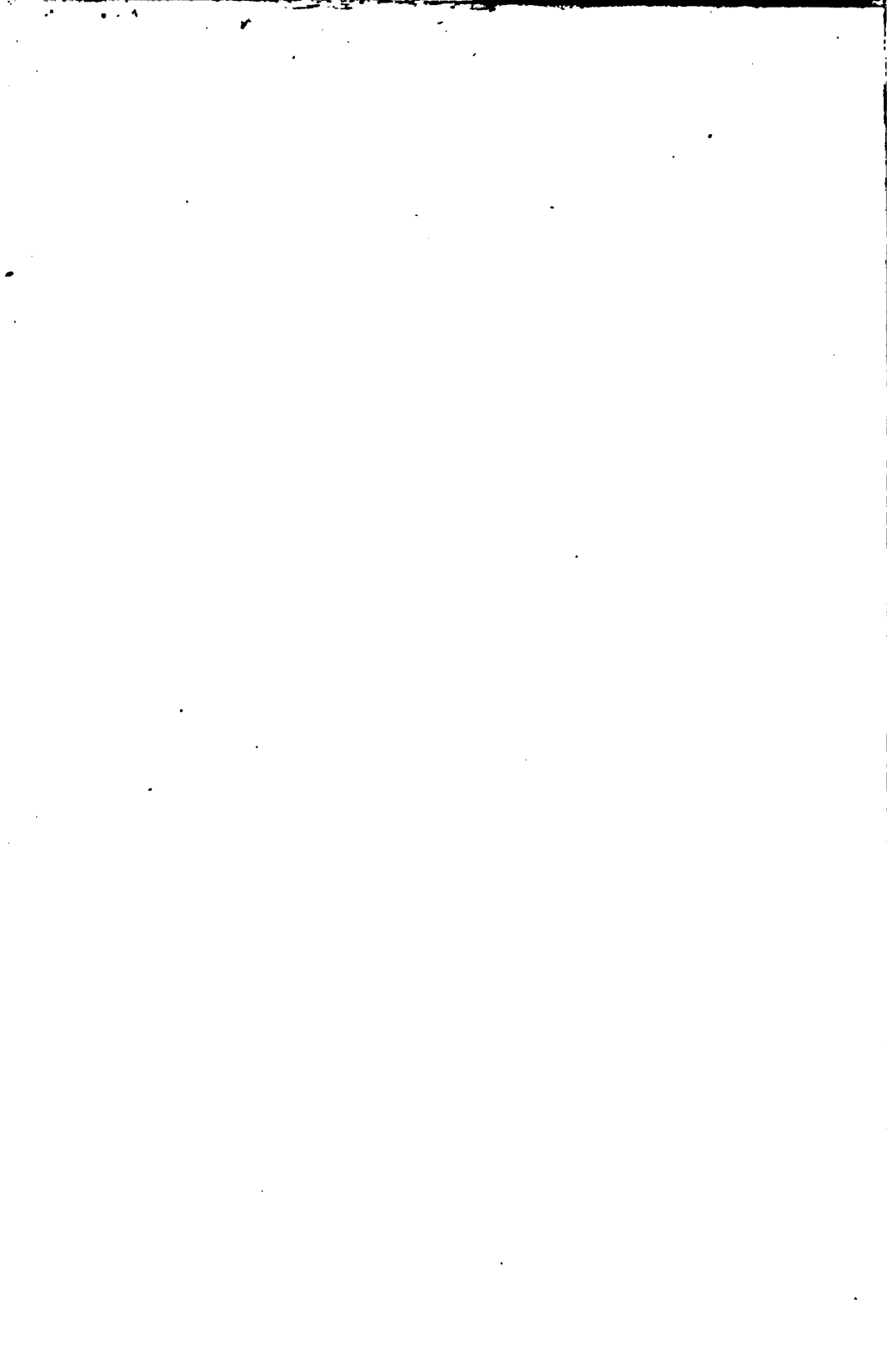


A PLANK PATH THROUGH THE BAMBOOS



SURVEYING GARDEN LAND

To face page 184



Fang-Lawi system, an annual expense is incurred in measuring the cultivated areas, but with the knowledge gained from the survey the Ku-Ko system might be advantageously adopted throughout the country.

In many districts the fishing rights over the *klongs* are worth more than the right of growing paddy on the surrounding land. For miles the *klongs* are bordered by a weed with a large flat leaf, which often encroaches so far that only a narrow lane of clear water is left in the middle. The weeds are purposely grown to harbour fish, and for the right to plant them an annual tax is paid, which seems small in proportion to the number of fish taken and to the obstruction caused to passing boats. The fishing rights do not necessarily belong to the men whose land borders the *klong*, and indeed it is not uncommon for a single rich Chinaman to own the rights over a whole *klong*. Bamboo stakes are first driven into the mud at long intervals, to keep the weeds from floating away, and the weeds, collected from marshy places, are then planted around them. In a very short time they form a continuous belt of floating vegetation, with long stalks reaching down into the mud. Once or perhaps twice a year a section of the weed is surrounded by a net; the stalks are cut, and the net is drawn to the bank, enclosing vast quantities of fish. Only in front of the *wats* there are enclosures which are never netted, for here all life is sacred.

Rather more elaborate are the fish-traps: great enclosures of reeds set close together, with a funnel-shaped opening at one end. Into the trap the fish

swim easily enough, but once inside it is hard to find the small inner opening of the funnel, and harder still to pass the ring of inward-pointing spikes which guards it. In a few weeks the trap is



A SIAMESE FISHERMAN

a seething mass of fish, and men come with nets to bale them out. Then there are innumerable ways of netting fish directly. There is the circular net which is thrown by hand, in a manner common throughout the East as far as Japan. For permission to use it an annual licence of fourteen pence

(one *tical*) is paid. As the fisherman stands poised in the bow of his sampan, with the net thrown over one arm, he might be taken as the model for some Ethiopian *retiarius* in the arena. Then with an



A SIAMESE FISHERMAN

easy swing the net is thrown, and with a soft splash sinks down till it lies outspread upon the bottom. It is drawn up by a string attached to its centre, and the edges, weighted by a small chain, fall together, entangling any fish which may have lain beneath it when the cast was made. At low tide

children wade out into the mud with baskets which they push before them like shrimping nets ; others clap round baskets at a venture into the mud, with the mouth downward, and explore the interior by thrusting one hand through an opening in the bottom. They are often rewarded by finding a mud-fish inside.

Still simpler methods are employed. A canoe with a white board dipping into the water is paddled along near the bank at night, and the startled fish endeavouring to jump over it are caught in the air, by a net which projects from the far side. We can easily form some idea of the efficiency of this method, for as the launch tows us up stream fish are continually jumping away from the bows of the boat, and it will be unlucky if, in the course of the day, one does not alight on board. Fine fish, two or three pounds in weight, may thus be secured without trouble. Large numbers of fish are left in the fields as the water goes down, and every pond is the scene of active fishing operations. Indeed the proverbial fisherman would have no scope for exaggeration in Siam. I have camped upon the bank of a river and imagined that I heard waves breaking on a sandy shore, only to find that the noise was caused by shoals of small fish jumping.

Very mysterious is the way in which fish appear in pits dug far from any river, and filled only with rain-water. It is true that the mud-fish will walk upon the river banks and even cross a fairly moist field—a friend of mine once tripped over one in his tent—but we can hardly believe that they make journeys of many miles. Nor can we accept the

theory that the fish bury themselves in the mud while the country is still flooded, and exist underground until they are released by the digging of the pit. The only possible explanation seems to be that the spawn are dropped by birds, and grow to maturity in an incredibly short space of time.

Some very curious varieties of fish are found. There is one that lies in wait under the bank, and if a fly settles within range he shoots it with a drop of water, and so knocks it off into the river. In clear water there lives a species of small carp, about the size of a stickleback and of a beautiful peacock blue, with ruby-coloured fins. They are extremely pugnacious and they are often kept in glass bowls by the natives, who match them against each other, and wager large sums of money upon them.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER IX

CAMP LIFE

"If a dog bites thee do not bite him in return."—*Maxim of PRA RUANG.*

ON the Bangpakong river, a day's row from its mouth, stands the village of Ban Rong Lao: a score of homesteads along the bank and a market, the centre of the country-side for ten miles around. Between rows of shanties, thatched with attap, dark narrow passages lead to villainous opium dens, or to the gambling-house where all day long half-naked Siamese and Chinese sprawl over the floor, watching the croupiers as they rake to and fro the piles of coin. An overpowering smell pervades the whole place, and emanates from a large shed in which stand rows of jars, filled with a fermenting liquor distilled from the rice. In front of the market Chinamen are always drawing water from the landing-stages, and splashing about in the river underneath. Half way across the river stretches a row of fishing stakes, and at night lanterns are hung upon them in order that passing boats may not foul the nets, for the river is a great highway. Heavily laden sampans stop to barter their merchandise, and empty rice boats, with a fair wind and the tide beneath them, scud past faster than a launch can steam. Three times a week the little mail steamer calls on her way down to the gulf,

whence she goes round to Bangkok. On the alternate days she makes the return journey up the river to Pachin. By her we can get to Bangkok in something like twelve hours, but the boat journey into Bangkok through the *klongs* takes four days.

At this place I camped for many weeks, at a respectful distance from the market. My tent was pitched inside a barn with walls of split bamboo, floor of beaten earth and roof of attap, which came down in a low sweep far beyond the walls, and formed a pleasant verandah. In front flowed the river, and behind was a thick belt of palms and bamboos, interspersed with gardens, but in a quarter of a mile or less this gave place to open country. An attap roof wards off the rays of the sun as no canvas can ever do, and I was better off than had I camped in a *sala*, though lacking the advantage of a raised floor.

When camping on the ground we must be prepared to find that our cases of provisions are swarming with white ants, nor are these the only unwelcome visitors. It is distinctly unpleasant, when about to put on one's trousers in the morning, to find that half-a-dozen scorpions are clinging to the folds of the garment, their light brown bodies almost indistinguishable against the khaki which is the usual up-country wear.

A friend of mine suffered a far worse experience when, on pulling on a boot one morning, he became painfully aware of the fact that some venomous creature was lodged in the toe. Tearing off the boot he shook out a great black centipede. Then he snatched up the medical book with which officers of the Survey Department are thoughtfully pro-

vided, that they may know how to act in emergencies of this kind, and with feverish anxiety he turned the pages till he came to *Bite of a Centipede*. "This is not fatal," he read, and a hasty expression of gratitude escaped him, "but the bitten person will suffer severe agony for several hours"—my friend's joy was modified—"and nothing can be done!" The book was severely condemned, but in relating the circumstance afterwards my friend used always to say, with pathetic emphasis, that the book was true.

Sometimes other disadvantages attend the practice of camping on the ground, as when one unfortunate European woke up to find that his tent had been cut open and all his boxes removed during the night. For some time after this experience he adopted the ingenious expedient of sleeping beneath a sheet of corrugated iron, which he thought would defeat any midnight robber who tried to stab him. Armour-plating need not, however, be considered an essential part of the ordinary traveller's up-country equipment.

At Ban Rong Lao I was fortunate, for although my bamboo house was not without its *fauna*, few of the more unpleasant species were represented. Little lizards raced over the walls and did good service in eating up the flies. With startling suddenness a loud "To-kay!" repeated half-a-dozen times, would cause me to look up and see a rather larger spotted lizard. His presence is considered lucky, especially if he is able to repeat his call nine times. He rarely gets beyond seven or eight without sticking over the last syllable, though he evidently does his best for us and makes

most desperate efforts to get it out before he gives up, with a groan of disappointment. Perhaps he is trying to make up for his big relative, the great water monitor, who brings ill luck. Another jolly little inmate of my house was a frog with suckers on his toes, which enabled him to spring upon a vertical wall and hang there. He was not so successful in his endeavours to hop about on the vertical surface, and when he grew excited in the chase he suffered many a tumble.

It was my business to set forth each day in order to supervise the work of the native surveyors who were scattered over the district, and as far as possible to persuade the local officials to work in harmony with them, whilst incidentally I acted as medical practitioner to half the country-side.

The neighbourhood of Ban Rong Lao is much cut up by *klongs*, and the few trestle bridges are constructed in a way which makes it a highly dangerous feat to walk across them. The trestles are spanned by single loose planks, sometimes rounded on their upper surface and sometimes rounded underneath, so that as one walks they are in a state of unstable equilibrium ; but this is simple compared with those spans which are bridged only by the projecting ends of the adjacent planks. Here we must walk gingerly to escape being thrown off by the springing plank, and in the middle of the span we find that the plank has sunk beneath our weight, and the continuation of the bridge is breast high. More often there was no bridge, and if I could not get ferried across in some passing boat there was nothing for it but to wade.

There are fifty-six known species of snakes in

Siam, but of these only twelve are poisonous.¹ One of the poisonous snakes, however—the cobra—is the commonest of all. The ordinary black cobra is at least as anxious to get out of our way as we can be to get out of his, but at the beginning of the rainy season, when the fields are getting wet, he betakes himself to the drier dividing ridges, and we must look carefully where we tread. The great Hamadryad, or King Cobra, alone of all snakes will attack a man unprovoked, and even give chase to him. He is so like the colour of the dried grass that sometimes we approach without perceiving him, but when he raises his head and inflates his hood in gusty rage, he is a bold man who would dispute the path with him. I once saw a native running, as I thought, from several others who brandished sticks, but when I came up to them I found that a hamadryad had really been occupying the chief rôle as at once pursuer and pursued, and that after a short but exciting run they had succeeded in killing him.

Pythons are met with even in Bangkok, and they grow to a length of thirty feet. At Ratburi there is a hill which no man dare ascend, for it is said to be the abode of a monstrous serpent "many tens of *waks*" in length.² One small snake has a peculiar red mark upon his tail, which has the appearance of a second head. The Siamese dread this snake very much, for they believe, erroneously, that it is very deadly, and that it actually has a head at each end, both of which must be cut off in order to destroy it. Another common snake which is harmless and very pretty is the bright green whip snake.

¹ "Notes on the Fauna of Siam," by Stanley Smyth Flower, published in the *Bangkok Directory*.

² A *wak* is two metres.

Some Siamese say that they are immune from snake bites, and they will show scars upon their arms which they say were made by the fangs of cobras. To obtain this immunity they eat a drug, made by grinding down from a certain white root a piece about the size of a pea, and mixing with it an equal quantity ground from a black root. The nature of the roots is kept a profound secret and few have even heard of them.

On our walks across country we really run less danger from snakes than from the fierce pariah dogs that guard every homestead. As long as we can face them they are easily kept at bay with sticks and clods of earth, but it is unsafe to approach the homestead alone, for a solitary stranger may be surrounded and perhaps bitten before the children have time to drag the dogs off, and cuff them into unwilling submission.

A large tract of land bordering one of the *klongs* near Ban Rong Lao, although quite bare of trees, is yet so high that it never gets properly flooded, and in consequence rice will not grow upon it. This was formerly waste ground, but it has now been converted into most profitable pineapple gardens, a result due to the enterprise of the Chinese who form the greater part of the population in the belt of garden-land along the river banks. Some of the land devoted to pineapple growing is owned by Siamese, but the actual labourers are almost entirely of Chinese, or mixed Chinese and Siamese, blood. In his report for 1901, Mr. A. J. Irwin of the Survey Department, gives the following particulars relating to this land:—"The owner makes an agreement with the incoming tenant which really

amounts to leasing him the land for ten years. In the first year the owner pays the tenant a certain sum for digging the ditches and preparing the ground. In the course of the following year the land is planted, and no money is paid, or rent charged. In the third year the pineapple plants begin to produce fruit, and for the remainder of the term of tenancy a rent is charged according to the productiveness of the plot cultivated. Some very high figures are quoted in the district as the rent of the best plots, but between thirty and forty *ticals* a *rai* seems to be an average rent. Forty *ticals* a *rai* is equivalent to about £5 an acre, a rent that is paid for but little agricultural land in the world."¹

In this district I have seen pineapples sold wholesale at the rate of one shilling a hundred, and in the market at Ban Rong Lao a good pineapple cost about a penny.

The neighbouring land is largely used as a grazing-ground for cattle, ponies and buffaloes. The cattle are of the usual Asiatic type, with high withers. They are used instead of buffaloes on the highlands which enclose the delta, for the buffaloes cannot work on the dry sandy soil of these places destitute of water. The bullock carts are similar to the buffalo carts but somewhat smaller, and the bullocks are yoked very far apart. They travel much faster than buffaloes, and in some parts of the country trotting bullocks are kept solely for racing. Each village sends a team yoked to a cart, and the winner of the race takes home all the defeated teams as

¹ At the time when this was written a *tical* was only worth a shilling. Forty *ticals* a *rai* would now be equivalent to nearly £6 an acre.

his spoil, but often not without a severe fight with the disappointed losers.

A considerable number of cattle are sent into Bangkok for export. This trade is almost entirely in the hands of Indians, and they are also the butchers in Bangkok. No Siamese would kill a bullock for food, and up country we are dependent entirely on rice, eggs, fish, fowls and fruit, supplemented by tinned provisions brought from Bangkok. It is not even possible to obtain fresh milk, but in places like Ban Rong Lao, where there is a large Chinese population, we have the doubtful advantage of being supplied with pork. A mystery of which I can offer no explanation is that, although ducks seem to be comparatively rare, ducks' eggs invariably appear upon our breakfast-table.

There is little in the dry months that we can add to the larder by shooting, though from October to January the rice fields are full of snipe. In jungly country doves are fairly common, and flocks of homing pigeons have occasionally been mistaken for the wild variety, whilst teal are abundant wherever there are marshes.

Ten miles east of Ban Rong Lao across the level plain, a hill rises to an elevation of some five hundred feet, forming a conspicuous landmark. It was towards the end of June that I set out to make the ascent. My coolies carried little or nothing, for I had heard that there was a village at the foot of the hill, in which I could obtain shelter for the night. We followed a cart track, and soon leaving behind the cultivated area passed through coarse grass jungle, with only here and there a solitary homestead standing in a clearing. Though before

the rains began the plain seemed absolutely level it was now apparent that there were slight undulations, and in the dips of the road we were forced to wade above our waists. Herons were very common, and great adjutant birds flapped heavily away before our approach, taking two clumsy hops before their ragged wings enabled them to rise off the ground.

At length we came to the edge of the forest which rose before us like a black wall. The cart track, however, ran straight on, and presently we came to a pleasant glade in which a few farm-houses clustered around a monastery. The head man of the village received me, and, as well as I could—for at that time my knowledge of Siamese was very limited—I explained to him the object of my visit. He then led the way to his house, and after climbing up to the platform, of solid teak planks, he placed one of the little rooms which opened on to it at my disposal. He also lent me a *panung*, for I was wet through, and the younger members of his family watched with keen delight my inexpert struggles with this garment. At evening all the male members of the family sat down together on the platform, while the girls waited on them, bringing out a brass tray on which was a bowl of steaming rice, surrounded by various condiments in little blue china dishes. Then when they had finished, another tray containing betel-leaf and its numerous accessories was brought forward, and while the men chewed the women ate. My coolies were bidden to the feast, but for me they committed the sin of killing a chicken. It should be said, however, that the Siamese do not regard taking the life of birds as such a grave sin



TRAVELLING BY RIVER

as killing larger animals. Very many Siamese possess guns, and their sporting instincts often override their religious scruples, though so ancient and rusty are their weapons that one fears more for the man who fires than for the bird fired at. Yet I have known a girl offer some paper birds to a man who was out snipe shooting, asking if he would not be content to shoot at these instead.

Very early the next morning we were awake, and set out along a cart track, accompanied by our host who came with us as a guide. The sandy road was a pleasant change after the swampy fields, but later in the year it was evidently no more than a watercourse, and the ruts worn by the cart wheels were two feet deep. It was tunnelled out of the thick forest, and rose so gently that we could form no idea as to the true direction of the hill. Without a guide we should soon have lost our way, for the road branched in many places. Most of the trees were less than a foot in diameter, but of a good height and so close together that, with the tangled undergrowth, they formed an impenetrable wall on either hand. Brilliant birds flashed across the path in front of us, seen for an instant and immediately swallowed up again in the twilight of the jungle. Amidst the forest there were a few large trees, bound with great ropes of creepers and with orchids growing high upon them, and all around us in the cool shade gorgeous butterflies were flitting about.

After walking for two hours we came to a steep rocky path, so overgrown that the coolies had to go in front, and cut a way with their knives. It brought us out upon a ridge, clothed on one side by the forest through which we had come, and on

the other breaking sharply off in a precipice, three hundred feet in height. We looked straight down upon the tops of the trees, which stretched right away to some mountains on the coast, and eastward as far as we could see. It was the beginning of the great jungle which covers the country from this point with scarcely a break, right away to Cambodia. Westward, cultivation and grass jungle were all merged in one sheet of green, through which the sluggish Bangpakong river wound its way. On the highest point of the ridge a little shrine covered a representation of the Buddha's footprint, and twice a year monks from the village come up here to place candles and flowers before it.

In the following year I was stationed not far from the mountains on the coast. Near the mouth of the Bangpakong river a small tributary *klong* runs through dreary salt marshes. The slimy banks, covered with forests of attap, are the haunt of crocodiles, which have been driven from the larger rivers by the steam launches. For many hours we follow its exasperating windings, but at length the attaps disappear, and we find ourselves in the midst of open paddy-land. The centre of the district is the little village of Tatacut, built on both sides of the *klong*, here quite narrow and spanned by a primitive drawbridge. Save for this one small brackish *klong* there is no water to be had except from pits, and when these have dried up the people depend on water brought in buffalo carts, from springs five or six miles away, near the foot of the hills. Since the usual means of communication by water is lacking, the district is well provided with cart tracks, and in the course of my work I spent

long days in the saddle. During the hottest hours I rested at some *wat*, and often before I got back to camp the shadows of the palms lay black upon the moonlight plain.

The Siamese ponies are sturdy little animals, whose thick-set necks remind us of the classical Greek type, nor are the Siamese, with their easy bare-backed seat, altogether unworthy representatives of the Athenian youths who sit their steeds so nobly on the frieze of the Parthenon. The pure-bred Siamese pony never exceeds $12\frac{1}{2}$ hands in height, and the average height is a hand less. It is probable that the breed has deteriorated, for the horses shown in the bas-reliefs at Angkor are considerably larger than this. The ponies are allowed to run wild over the grazing-grounds, and no attempt at selection for breeding is made. Moreover most of the finest ponies are sent in to Bangkok, and thus the stock is greatly impaired. Nevertheless, these small ponies possess wonderful endurance, and in speed they compare well with those of Burmah and China. A Siamese pony barely $11\frac{1}{2}$ hands in height, and carrying no less than 8 st. 12 lbs., has covered a mile in the good time of two minutes and sixteen seconds.¹

But it is of our races at Tatacut that I wish to tell. The entire population of the district was there, and every other man had brought a pony, though few intended to race. One man who meant business led his pony forward, and immediately became the centre of an admiring ring. Into the ring another pony was presently led, and then

¹ Messrs. M. M. Bidder and P. A. Thompson's "Imp," in the Royal Bangkok Sports Club Mile Handicap, April 1904.

followed a lengthy comparison, height, colour and markings being considered. All seemed to be going well when the challenger discovered a curl of hair on the chest of his rival's pony, and without more ado he declared the match off, for he could not hope to win against a pony possessing such a distinguishing mark of speed. Another and another pony followed, but still points were discovered in the original champion which seemed to preclude the possibility of his defeat, and for a time it looked as though there would be little sport that afternoon. At length, however, one man with greater confidence in the speed of his pony consented to race, but another hour was required to decide upon the stakes. When all was satisfactorily arranged it was announced that Nai Dee's (Mr. Good's) red pony, nine inches high, would race against Nai Lek's (Mr. Small's) green pony, said to be ten inches high, for a sum equivalent to £1 a side; and we adjourned to the race-course. The height is always given as so many inches—above three feet, understood—and as regards colour, "red" includes all bays and bright chestnuts, while "green" is applied to some browns and dark chestnuts, and is used in the sense of "wine dark."

The race-course was a rough track extending for half a mile over the paddy fields, and only wide enough for two ponies abreast. At the winning-post a string of flags was tied across the course, from three bamboos planted in the ground. After the difficulty of getting up the match it was a relief to find that we were not to be troubled with any such formality as weighing out, for each owner simply got hold of the smallest boy he could find

to ride his pony. When they were ready to start the spectators lined the course, some climbing upon bushes to get a better view, while others stood on the great conical ant-hills, which were common in that part of the country. The boys rode bare-backed, and the spectators closed in behind and ran after, shouting and waving sticks. As the winner passed between the bamboos at the end of the course he snatched the string of flags and bore it off, a plan which prevents any possibility of dispute in case of a close finish.

Racing is a sport to which the Siamese take kindly, for it is one in which they can indulge their passion for gambling. Cock-fighting is scarcely less popular, and elaborate precautions are taken to ensure fair play. The stakes are deposited in a small bag suspended over the pit out of reach of the spectators, and for time-keeper a bowl is set floating in water. There is a small hole in the bottom of the bowl through which it slowly fills, and when it sinks the round is over. The children are incessantly playing a game which consists in throwing coppers at a pile of the same small coins, and taking all which they succeed in knocking outside a ring. At this game they are extraordinarily skilful. It is humiliating to the European, who has spent a quarter of an hour in vain attempts to hit the coins, when a small naked child sends the whole pile flying with his first shot. Even such an innocent amusement as kite-flying is made a means of gambling. One man sends up his kite, and another standing behind him also flies his. The kites fly steadily though they have no tails, but by dexterously manipulating the string the second man makes his

kite swoop and rise again, entangling his opponent's string. The man whose kite is first brought to the ground loses the contest.

Of games which involve much physical exertion the Siamese are not fond, though the boys sometimes run races, and at the schools in Bangkok they play football. The only game which is truly national is that in which four or five men take a wicker ball and keep it in the air, kicking it from one to another, for ten minutes together. Once a year, at the time of T'hot Khatin, boat races are held, and there is keen rivalry between the neighbouring villages. On their way to the festival many an impromptu race takes place, and not seldom a dozen gaily dressed girls in a long canoe will paddle away from their male admirers, who in vain pursue them.

A few miles south of Tatacut the country changes its character, and the fields are half concealed amongst patches of jungle. This is perplexing country in which to find the way. I was once returning with a friend, at whose camp I was going to spend the night, when darkness overtook us. It was impossible to keep a straight course, for we were continually forced to turn aside, to avoid the patches of jungle which seemed to close in upon us on every side as the light failed. Then, too, we had to contend against an error which was essentially calculated to lead us astray, for we were provided with a luminous compass, but by an unfortunate mistake we took the North end for the South. Not till the moon rose in an unexpected quarter did we realise that our judgment in this matter had been at fault. We had then been wandering for several hours, and had to admit that we were lost.

Our coolies were equally strange to the district, and their sense of direction, which is generally very good, on this occasion failed entirely. At length we saw a light, and stumbling through a patch of sugar-cane we came to a small hut. The occupant, a Chinaman, was at first unwilling to accompany us, but at length with mingled threats and bribes we persuaded him to guide us back to camp.

From Tatacut we could take a bridle track, pleasantly shaded for the greater part of the way, and crossing a low spur of the hills drop down into the fishing town of Bangplasoi. Wooden jetties run out for half a mile over the mud flats, which are uncovered at low tide. One side of each jetty is kept clear for the fishing boats, and along the other side houses are built on piles. At night the occupants simply draw in the planks which connect their houses with the jetty, and they are then completely isolated and secure from robbers. When a house is being built the piles are driven in by a number of Chinamen who stand upon a cross-beam, one end of which is lashed to the pile while the other rests on the jetty. Holding on to a hand-rail they jump up and down, and so drive in the pile.

Out in the shallow waters of the bay, converging rows of bamboos planted upright in the mud extend for many miles. Boats easily brush through, but shoals of fish turn aside, not venturing to pass between the bamboos as they swing to and fro in the tide; so the fish swim along till they reach the narrow end of the funnel, and there pass through into a great trap.

Bangplasoi is one of the few places in which the distinctive breed of Siamese cats is fairly common.

There are two varieties, smoke-colour and cream, both with very dark vandyke-brown points and sky-blue eyes.

From Bangplasoi a gallop along a firm sandy beach, bordered by palm trees, and with the sparkling sea on our right hand, brings us to the rocky promontory of Anghin. On the beach at Anghin there stands a stone house, sometimes used as a sanatorium by Bangkok residents. One field season this house was occupied by V. of the Survey Department, and his wife. It was our custom to ride over on Saturday afternoons to some particular camp. On the Sunday each returned to his own camp, and for the remainder of the week we saw no Europeans. Hence one Saturday evening four of us were gathered together at Anghin. After dinner we sat in the verandah, listening to V. who could play the zither. The sea was lapping round the rocks at our feet, with gleams of phosphorescent light. The coolies were softly singing around a fire, and our ponies, tethered to trees near by, occasionally neighed to each other.

Suddenly into this peaceful scene there burst a blood-stained Siamese surveyor, with the news that five hundred soldiers had broken out of their barracks, ten miles away. Headed by their officers they had fired into his tent, killing two of his coolies. They had then chased him, and had vowed to kill all the Europeans at Anghin. We asked the surveyor what had become of his wife, and he said that she also had run away, but not being able to run as fast as he himself could, he had arrived first. While we were still undecided how much of this story to believe, other native surveyors kept arriving.



TRAVELLING WITH BUFFALO CART AND SLEDGES

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Each new arrival reported that the soldiers were hard upon his heels, and with each the stories of what the soldiers were going to do to us grew more blood-curdling. It is only in fiction that travellers ride about the country armed to the teeth, and we had no firearms except our host's revolver and an ancient gun belonging to one of the Siamese.¹ Believing that the soldiers had been drinking, and not knowing to what lengths their drunken frolic might extend, we did what we could to put the house in a state of defence. Sentries were posted and bamboos sharpened, for in the event of an attack we intended to line the steps leading up to the verandah, with spearmen. Then some genius suggested that we should bring up all the bottles of soda-water into the verandah, and use them as bombs at short range. They were never used in this way, but before the morning they had gone the way of all soda-water.

The gentleman with the gun walked proudly up and down, with the gun at full cock over his shoulder. He started at every small noise, and there can be no doubt that, until we sent him to join the sentries, our lives were in grave peril. Two coolies were despatched on ponies, with a letter to J., the Survey officer at Bangplasoi, asking for reinforcements. It was about nine o'clock the next morning when the relief column arrived—a single mounted gendarme, and, two or three hundred yards behind him, J. himself, riding on a pony, with a Mauser pistol. V., who had spent a sleepless night, was annoyed,

¹ Note the words used by Mr. Warrington Smyth in the preface to *Five Years in Siam*: "In Indo-China resort to force is a confession of the traveller's inability to comprehend the influences at work around him."

but J. explained that what we saw was only half his force. The remainder had fallen off its pony and was lying in the jungle some miles farther back.

It turned out that the soldiers, having chased our men for some miles, had returned to their barracks. The authorities in Bangkok took vigorous action and drastic punishment was meted out to them, but for many weeks our men would only consent to work with gendarmerie standing beside them with loaded rifles, to protect them.

The coolies who had been shot recovered, though as one had been shot through the head the report of his death could scarcely be called an exaggeration.

From Anghin a shady road winds round the coast to the pretty little village of Si'racha, nestling amongst the hills which come right down to the sea.

Often during the short holidays which break the routine of official life in Bangkok, a party of Europeans will charter a small steamer and escape for a day or so to this place, and the almost incredible hardships which they sometimes suffer on the voyage are counted as nothing, when weighed against the delights of bathing for hours together in the open sea. In the shallow waters of the little cove at Si'racha there is no fear of sharks, but once, at Christmas, when we were anchored some way out, we asked our old Siamese captain if there was any danger. He answered not, but later when we were dressing we heard him talking to the engineer. "It is curious," he said, "how foreigners always come down here at this time of the year, and they always eat and drink a great deal and then they bathe, and the sharks never bite them."

On the slopes of the hills sugar-cane, Indian corn,

tobacco, sweet potatoes and peas are grown. A very intoxicating liquor is manufactured from the toddy palms. A bamboo, with the stumps of the shoots untrimmed, is tied against the palm to serve as a rough ladder, by which a man can reach the leafy crown. He cuts off the fruit, and under the stem he hangs a bucket, made of a single joint of bamboo, and so catches the dripping sap from which the drink is made.

In the wide valleys between the hills sufficient paddy is grown for the needs of the district. On undulating ground the fields are laid out in terraces, separated by ridges which retain the water. Water-courses are made round the foot of the hills, and the water is led on to the fields through pipes of hollow tree trunks, and from the highest fields it is passed down terrace by terrace, through the embankments. Farther back amongst the jungle-clad hills, tiger, deer and wild boar are found, but the sportsman in Siam is often doomed to disappointment, and he must be prepared to spend many weeks in order to secure very few trophies. Monkeys are common, and amongst them are the Hoolook Gibbons, concerning whom there is a curious legend. The following version appeared in the *Bangkok Times*.¹

"Many hundred years ago a renowned *Reussi* (*Yogi*) lived in a cave in northern Siam. According to the custom of the time all young men of position and circumstance proceeded to his cave to finish their education. When Prince Chan Te Koo Rop came of age he, too, was sent to this *Reussi* for final training in the arts and sciences. He proved himself an apt pupil. The *Reussi* took a great

¹ 25th February 1905.

liking to him. When he had completed his term of study and was on the eve of returning to his home the *Reussi* called him to him and said, 'My disciple, take this sealed box with you to your home. It contains something of importance for you, but I do not wish you to open the box till you have reached your home, when matters will explain themselves. I therefore will not enlighten you any further.'

"Overjoyed at this mark of favour shown to him, Prince Chan Te Koo Rop set off on his journey early next morning with his mysterious box; but after a few days' travel his curiosity overcame him and he opened it in defiance of the *Reussi's* wishes. To his intense surprise a handsome damsel sat up and then stepped out of the box. They proceeded on their journey and he took her to wife; but before many days they met a notorious robber chief who was out hunting. He travelled in their company for a day or two, and the damsel being fair and handsome, and he being strong and manly, they found that they loved each other. To test the damsel's feelings thoroughly he asked her for the Prince's sword. This she handed to him, and in doing so pointed the blade towards her husband's body, he having his back turned at the moment. This act of hers was so significant that the robber chief slew the Prince without any hesitation.

"In the morning reaction set in and he began to feel qualms of conscience. It was against his rule to kill unoffending people. In the present case the Prince was killed in cold blood. He began to argue further: 'The Prince was also a man of fine features; he had rank and position; the girl would

¹ This cry is thought to resemble the Siamese word *puā* (husband).

have been raised to rank in course of time ; I am merely a robber chief ; my house is in the forest ; I consider myself less handsome than the Prince. This woman is clearly treacherous and unstable ; I cannot trust her. She might at any moment betray me.' That night he vanished to his old haunts, and the damsel, left to herself in the forest, a stranger in a strange land, wandered aimlessly about. The attention of Pra In, whose seat is in one of the heavens and whose duty it is to look after the welfare of us mortals, was attracted to this helpless woman. He at once came down, and on making inquiry of her ascertained what had happened. Cursing her in most terrible language for her infidelity whereby her husband lost his life, he commanded that she should immediately be turned into a *kani* or hoolook gibbon. This took place instantly, and the gibbon fled howling to the trees and disappeared. Since that day hoolook gibbons are known by their long, piercing, mournful wail.¹

"Pra In intentionally created no male gibbons but permitted the *kang* or black long-tailed monkey with a white ring round its face to be its mate. Since then, of the progeny all females have been hoolooks and all males *kangs*."



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER X

AYUTHIA AND THE ELEPHANT HUNT

"When a furious elephant comes rushing along get out of his way."
Maxim of PRA RUANG.

EARLY one September afternoon I was driving, with a colleague, from the Survey School on the outskirts of Bangkok towards the town, under a splendid avenue which throws a chequer of light and shade on the white road. We were followed by a box *gharry*, piled high with cases of all shapes and sizes. Cooks and boys clung to the steps, and rolls of bedding, lamps and cooking utensils overflowed from the interior, and projected through the windows. Three days' official holiday had given us an opportunity of following the example of those adventurous tourists who penetrate the interior—by railway—and visit the old capital, Ayuthia, which they refer to as "the jungle" on their return.

At the station we found the usual crowd of Siamese, squat upon the platform amidst their possessions, and placidly chewing betel-nut. They arrive some hours before the train is due to start, for they do not like to be hurried. Presently the gates opened and the crowd moved forward to take their seats. The third-class carriages, of the usual Continental type, were pretty full, but in the solitary saloon first we were the only occupants. Most of the higher officials on the railway are Germans,

but the guards and station-masters are generally Siamese, and the engine drivers are Indians or Eurasians. The locomotives, like the steam launches on the river, burn wood fuel.

The single line runs along an embankment through the swampy fields, where the houses are dotted about amidst little islets of bamboo and bananas. Soon even these disappeared, and we looked down upon a vast expanse of water. By the sides of the embankment the "borrow" pits formed deeper channels through which strong currents swirled along, and here and there upon the other side stood wretched houses of bamboo and thatch, with rickety bamboo ladders leading up to them, and boats moored as it were at the front doors. We stopped at several stations and there seemed to be a brisk local traffic. Then we crossed the artificial Klong Rong Sit, which stretches away in a straight line through the monotonous, treeless plain like a miniature Suez Canal. There is a lock at either end of the canal, so that boats can always sail along it, though they cannot enter or leave the canal at low tide. The material dug out forms raised towing paths, and there is an almost continuous line of villages along the banks.

In a little over two hours we were running along the edge of the thick belt of trees which marks the river bank, and in the gaps we caught glimpses of the river itself. Then some ruined brick pagodas standing in the fields showed that we had reached our destination. These remains upon the east bank are the ruins of the city founded by the old Cambodians. The later Siamese capital, Ayuthia, was

built upon an island, formed by two branches of the river.

Thick jungle now covers the island, and in its midst are the ruins of the temples which were the wonder and the glory of Ayuthia when her rulers were the arbiters of Indo-China. Year by year the walls are riven asunder by the roots of the Bo trees till, when the destruction is all but complete, the interlacing stems once more bind together the shattered masses and preserve them. Nor is all this desolation due to the ravages of time, for during the sack of Ayuthia very many pagodas were overthrown by the Burmans, and thousands of old bronze Buddhas were broken in pieces, either wantonly or in the hope of finding treasure. There amongst the piles of brick and matted creepers these headless images lie, till some European bears them away to place in his collection.

Near the head of the island there stands a palace, once the residence of the Second King, but though the outer wall is well preserved it contains nothing but a few small modern buildings. Beside the palace are the Local Government offices, the prison and an ugly wooden market, but by far the greater number of the inhabitants live in the floating houses which line the neighbouring *klongs* for miles.

So has Ayuthia fallen, and even its ancient title, Krung Tep,¹ "The City of Angels," has passed on to Bangkok, the modern capital. But if we would see Ayuthia as it was in King Narai's day we must

¹ "The Siamese call it *Crung si ayu tha ya*, and not *Juthia* or *Odia*. *Crung si*, signifies excellent town. Their histories call it also *Crung theppa pra ma ha na kon*." Tachard, *op. cit.* p. 265.

picture to ourselves broad streets "paved with Brick and bordered on each side with low houses, behind which there are trees that cast a shade into the Streets, and which make pleasant walks when the heat is over."¹ Here and there were the houses of great nobles, all of wood, but with three roofs, one above another, as a badge of dignity. Clusters of pinnacles arose on every side, and near the centre of the town stood "the fairest Temple of Siam . . . a vast and high Fabric built cross-ways," having over it five domes thickly crusted with gold, and symmetrically grouped about it were forty-four "great Piramides of different form and well wrought, ranked orderly upon different Plat-forms."²

The streets were thronged with representatives of almost every nation, and then—as now—the Chinese were the greatest traders there.

But to return to our own expedition; we went first to call upon the Governor, whose house was near the palace. To reach this quarter it was necessary to cross over to the island, so carrying our things down to a covered landing-stage we embarked in a *rua chang*. The distance up the river was not great but it took us fully half-an-hour, for the stream was running down like a mill-race after the heavy rains. The Governor was out, so we dropped down stream again and turned in to a small *klong*. The remains of the old city wall form an embankment which surrounds the island, and through this our *klong* cut. Inside we found a clearing in the jungle, where on a sanded space there stood a monastery, shaded by large trees. To

¹ Tachard, *op. cit.* p. 179.

² *Ibid.* p. 181.

this spot we had been recommended by my Siamese boy, Make. We found that his own home was on the opposite bank, and as we sat at dinner in the *sala*, we were surrounded by an admiring crowd of his small brothers and sisters.

After dinner we sent our cards up to the Governor's house, and finding that he had returned we followed ourselves. Make preceded us to announce our coming, and having removed his shoes on the verandah he crawled into the Governor's presence with far greater respect than I ever saw him show to any other dignitary, for this was as it were his feudal lord, and all the edicts of the past thirty years have not served to remove the old spirit of submission. We found that the Governor was a most mild and pleasant-mannered gentleman. He offered us a floating house to live in during our stay, but we had already made ourselves comfortable in the *sala*, and did not feel inclined to move in the dark.

The Governor took a great interest in the ruins, and every year he had the undergrowth cut away and paths made through the jungle, so that the buildings can still be visited. Formerly all work of this nature was performed by the forced labour of the inhabitants. Since forced labour has been abolished it is sometimes rather difficult to get any work done at all, but here as in the other provincial capitals the prisoners are employed, and practically they are the Governor's personal slaves. The prisoners themselves have benefited by the change, for instead of being left to rot in prison they may be seen wandering about the country with apparently no restriction, save that they wear heavy leg



THE GREAT BRONZE BUDDHA
PRA SI SAM PET, WAT SOMORAKOT, AYUTTHIA

irons. We ourselves conversed with a cheerful murderer, who was tending the buffaloes and playing with the children outside our *sala*. Charitable people often give the prisoners food and tobacco, and there seems to be no reason why their friends should not relieve them of their fetters. This does in fact often happen, and much of the energy of the local gendarmerie is expended in recapturing them.

The Governor would have gone with us to the ruins had it been an ordinary working day, but since it was holiday-time he was very busy. However he sent a representative who took us over the palace. We ascended a tower and from the battlemented top looked over all the island, whilst wooden pointers enabled us to identify the various spires which rose above the tree-tops. Then followed an interesting half hour in the little museum where, according to the curator, everything was five hundred years old. From the palace we walked along a road shaded by noble trees, and then a jungle path brought us to a large open space, where once stood the great Wat Somorakôt. Three slender *pra chedis* spring from the outer wall, but the walls themselves are grass-grown mounds, and the spacious courts are filled with scrub. On a hillock in the centre stands the *bawt*, roofless now and stripped of its plaster covering, so that the red-brick walls and pillars stand naked beneath the sky. Within sits a colossal bronze Buddha, who stares scornfully forth from the walls fast crumbling into ruin about him.

To obtain a photograph I scrambled up to a breach in the walls, and balanced the camera amidst

fallen bricks and creepers, whilst overhead an impending mass of brick-work threatened me with destruction. The Buddha is about thirty-five feet in height, and the brick pedestal raises it another twenty feet from the ground. The image was made by building a core of brick, and over this the great bronze plates were laid, dovetailing into one another and held together by iron straps.

Returning to the *sala* we found tiffin awaiting us. In the absence of that restraint which we usually imposed upon him, our cook had allowed his genius full play, and plied us with course on course till we were sunk in slumber.

That evening we walked along the embankment, and taking a sampan a mile lower down crossed over to Wat Chern. This temple is three hundred years old, but it is in perfect repair, and it is always thronged with Chinese worshippers. The most important building is the lofty *wihan*. It was already dusk when we got there, and as we stood in the porch we could at first see nothing but the blackness of the interior; but slowly as our eyes grew accustomed to the light the huge dull gold image of the Buddha loomed out of the obscurity, and seemed to fill the whole building. Stepping inside we saw him sitting with majestic mien between great round pillars which upheld the roof. Most impressive was the lighting, which is so managed as to produce at this time of day a wonderful effect. In the lower part of the building the only light entered through the door, for in the deeply sunk windows the heavy shutters were all fast closed; but high up in the lantern-like roof was a narrow opening through which the waning sun-



PRA CHERN, AYUTHIA

beams fell like a glory about the Buddha's head, though they could not pierce the black recesses of the roof far above.

This image is built of brick covered with plaster, and then lacquered and gilt. It is fully fifty feet in height, and only a narrow passage is left between the image and walls of the building. Around the walls are many other images, standing and sitting, and some far larger than life size, but they are all dwarfed by the enormous figure in the middle. The walls themselves are honeycombed with innumerable small niches, each containing an image, and it is said that there are altogether twenty thousand images in the building.

On the following day we took a sampan and rowed up the river. Above the town we entered a pretty *klong* overhung with trees and bamboos, but presently it became a regular street of floating houses. Here we turned off into a by-way, only practicable for boats when the floods are out, for it led us through a forest where the trees were standing in two feet of water. After turning and twisting amongst the trunks and breaking through the bushes we came out upon the open fields, and rowed across to a patch of higher ground on which stood a tall *pra chedi*, raised upon a pyramidal base. This was the famous "Mount of Gold," of which old writers tell, but the glory of its gilded spire had departed, and since our visit it has been overthrown by a hurricane. From the highest terrace we had a splendid view over the surrounding country, and looked across the flooded fields to the wooded island of Ayuthia.

Beyond the busy lines of floating houses, on a

tongue of land between two of the numerous branches of the river, stands the *paniet* or elephant stockade. This is a square enclosure of posts, ten feet high and about two feet apart. It is surrounded by a broad wall with a parapet, and at one end is a pavilion for the King and his court. On opposite sides of the stockade are two narrow openings, connected with passages which lead through the wall. These passages are closed by great beams which hang pivoted at one extremity from a framework overhead. They can easily be drawn aside by ropes, and when the tension is relaxed they swing back again, and bar the entrance. Outside the wall more posts are planted, so as to enclose a large triangular space, whose apex is at the narrow gap in the wall. In the base of the triangle a wide gate is left, and beyond this radiating lines of posts direct the advance of the elephants. This is the scene of the great "Elephant Hunt," which takes place once in every three or four years.

North of the Nakawn Nayok river a vast tract covered with long grass stretches away to the Korat hills, from whose jungle-clad slopes the wild elephants come down and wander over the plain. The natives who live in outlying homesteads go in considerable fear of them, and occasionally a man is chased and killed by a "rogue" elephant. An elephant that is about to go *must* can be recognised by the patches of oil which exude from his temples, and when in this condition he goes off by himself and he is a dangerous fellow to approach. The herds may be approached without much difficulty, and though they are shy they do not exhibit that unreasoning fear of man which causes the elephants

in wilder districts to stampede. Sometimes indeed, when in mischievous mood, they will come amongst the paddy fields doing great damage, and the cultivators fly to the frail protection of their houses, where they do their best to drive away the intruders by firing guns and banging tins.

One of my camps was on the Bangpakong river, not far from Pachin, and there I used to see the elephants almost every day. My first encounter with them followed upon the report that a herd of five hundred had been seen upon the other side of the river. I found the ground trampled all over, and in one place the grass was crushed down and showed clearly the outline of an elephant, who had been lying on his side. Then as I was pushing through some tall reeds, which screened the country in front from my sight, I came suddenly upon two huge black shapes. Two elephants were quietly tearing up great bundles of grass and stuffing it into their mouths, whilst the small white herons sat on their backs as contentedly as on the buffaloes. The elephants did not see or hear me, but as I was making a detour to avoid them they suddenly winded me. Instantly they threw up their trunks, the better to catch the scent, and then with flapping ears they shambled off in the opposite direction. On another occasion I saw five or six wallowing in a mud bath, and amongst them two half-grown ones. Each wrapped his trunk fast round the other's head, and they gnawed each other like two great puppies at play.

I was anxious to obtain some photographs of the elephants, so one day I took my camera and walked along the river bank. There was one place called

the Elephants' Ford, where it was said that they crossed every night. At first I was unable to see the country on the other side, owing to the bamboos which fringed the banks, but presently there came a bare patch and I looked across. A storm was raging over the hills, which were almost blotted out, but between them and me stretched the sunlit plain, and wandering over it in many directions were elephants in small herds of six or eight. After being ferried across I approached the nearest herd. Though there was no cover of any description I was able to walk up to within a hundred yards of them and take several photographs, using a tripod and focussing cloth, and all this time they did not see me.¹ At length, however, they took fright, and rushing together went off all abreast at a lumbering trot, which raised a great cloud of dust. At a little distance they wheeled in perfect line, and faced me as the buffaloes do under similar circumstances. Then satisfied that they were not being followed they broke up and started feeding again.

Amongst all the wild elephants that I saw, either in the jungle or at Ayuthia during the hunt, there were no tuskers except young ones, though there were very many large tuskless males. Where the big tuskers go to I do not know, but tracks have been seen where, in addition to the footprints, there were pairs of holes made by the points of the tusks, which were so long that they touched the ground at each step as the elephant walked

¹ I appear, however, to have made a most indifferent attempt to set the camera level, and by an oversight this was not put right when the reproduction was made. The country is, in reality, perfectly flat.



WILD ELEPHANTS IN THE GRASS JUNGLE NEAR PACHIN

To face page 222



along. The young tuskors which are caught and tamed at Ayuthia sometimes grow enormous tusks. In the museum at Bangkok there is a tusk that measures 9 feet $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, along the outside curve.

Weeks before the Hunt is to take place at Ayuthia the elephant-catchers are sent out into the jungle. The business of elephant-catching was part of the system of forced labour, and these men now form a hereditary caste. They take with them a score of tame tuskors and a small army of beaters. Many days may be spent in locating the herds, and many more are required to collect the wild elephants into one great herd. All this while the beaters exercise the utmost caution, for were the elephants to be alarmed at this early stage they would move off to a different place, and the work would have to be begun over again. As soon as the elephants have been collected into a single herd they are surrounded by a cordon of beaters and tame tuskors, and at night fires are lit to prevent them from breaking out. Then the great drive begins. A tame elephant leads the way, half-a-dozen tuskors press in upon their rear, and the herd moves off, while on either flank are the long lines of beaters. So they proceed over the open plain, covering ten or twelve miles each day, for they often stop to feed and even on the march they do not exceed a rate of four miles an hour.¹ It may take a fortnight to reach Ayuthia, and at any stage of the proceedings one concerted charge by the wild elephants would brush aside the lines

¹ When travelling with loaded elephants the average rate is under three miles an hour.

that hem them in, yet they never make the attempt. This drive differs from anything else of the sort, and it is only possible from the fact that, having been corralled in this way for many generations, the elephants are semi-tame. It has always been held that the elephants would not breed in captivity, and for this reason only as many as are actually required are selected from the herd, and the remainder are released and allowed to wander back to the jungle. Thus to many of these elephants the drive is by no means a new experience. In the *keddahs* of India and in northern Siam, where whole herds are captured to work in the teak forests, the beaters are careful never to show themselves, and elaborate precautions are taken to conceal the stockade in thick jungle; but here at the end of the drive the elephants have to face not only the stockade but a mob of spectators. For the Elephant Hunt is a great national holiday. In Bangkok all the Government offices are closed, and every one goes up to Ayuthia. The trains are packed to overflowing, and the house-boats on the river recall, in a small way, the scene at Henley Regatta.

It was in March 1905 that I was able to be present at the Hunt. Our party travelled up from Bangkok by train, and on our arrival we found a launch waiting to take us to our house-boat through the streets of floating houses. On the platform of almost every house was a little altar, decked with flowers and incense sticks, to do honour to the King as he passed. As we sat at tiffin the excitement of the crowd on the bank warned us that the elephants were in sight, so taking a sampan we



THE WILD HERD POURING OVER THE RIVER BANK

To face page 224



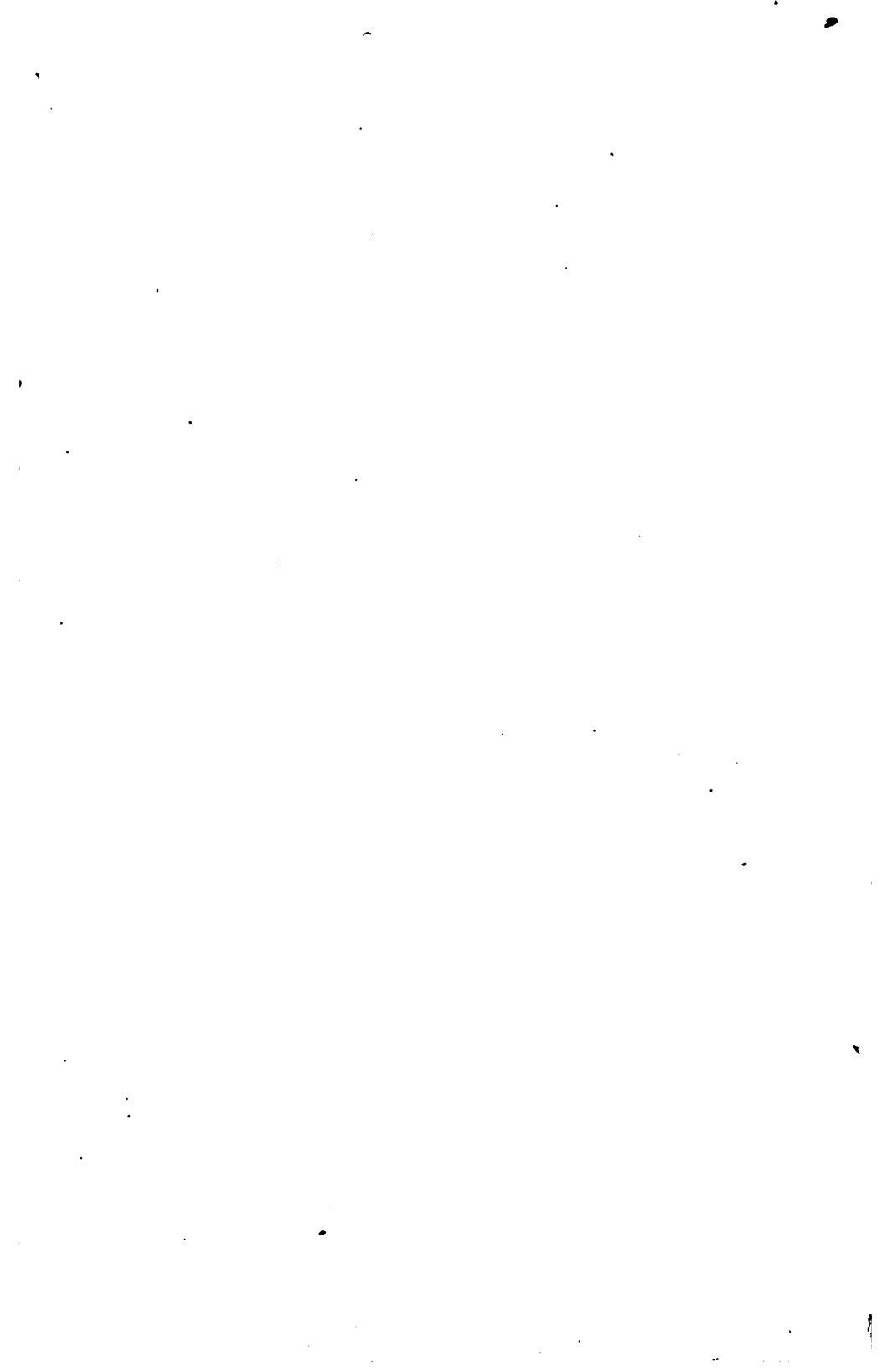
rowed over to a small island in the river. From this point we could look across the level plain to the jungle, two miles away. The elephants were already half way across the plain, moving forward in a compact black mass guarded by the tame tuskers on every side. Each of the tuskers was ridden by a mahout and an elephant-catcher, wearing blue uniforms and broad-brimmed sun helmets. As the herd approached the river bank the crowd scattered from before them, taking refuge behind the flanking lines of tame elephants. Straight on the leader went, down the bank, and waded out into the river. Then followed a fine sight as the great herd hesitated for an instant on the brink, and poured over the edge in a black wave, two hundred and fifty of them, slipping and sliding down the steep bank in a cloud of dust, with trumpetings and squeals. Soon they were all swimming, keeping so closely together that they formed one black patch upon the water, while the tuskers preserved their positions on every side. As they swam they held the tips of their trunks above the surface, while the mahouts, upon the backs of the tame elephants, knelt or stood upright. After gaining the other side the herd was allowed to rest for a while, and the hot thirsty animals revelled in the shallow water, taking deep draughts and squirting streams over each other in excess of joy.

At length the final drive began. Led by two tame elephants, and closely hemmed in behind, the herd pressed forward into the outer stockade, and the bars were slipped behind them. They had still to face the narrow passage through the wall, leading to the inner enclosure, and this they did

not like at all. As before, a tame elephant led the way, but it was not until the tuskers had come up and pushed and prodded those behind that the herd swayed towards the opening, and still those in front held back. At last one made a break and with a frightened squeal ran in, and he was followed by many others. In this way fifty or sixty elephants were got inside, but then a strange thing happened. Perhaps it was the sight of the great crowd pressing closely against the posts on every side that at length made the elephants realise that they were in a trap, but, whatever the cause, they were growing very restive, and remained huddled together in the centre of the stockade. Now and then they would crush against the posts, and one big fellow made a fierce charge in the attempt to regain his freedom. Then the posts creaked ominously, for though they look so stout they are hollow with age. When the elephants came near, the crowd outside gave way and prepared to fly, should they break out, but between the posts were stationed men who thrust with long spears at the elephants, and kept them back. Matters were now at a dead-lock, for no more elephants would go through the opening, and those behind were pushing forward and boring into the throng, the little tuskers charging fiercely in with the best of them. As the crush grew worse some were trampled underneath and some were lifted off their feet, while in the very middle one great tuskless male was seen high above his fellows, walking upon the backs of those who had sunk to the ground. Then, mingled with the grunts and squeals, was heard the deep roar of anger, and on the outskirts of the scrum were some who slapped



THE WILD HERD CROSSING THE RIVER



the ground with their trunks in rage. It was soon apparent that many of the smaller elephants were being crushed to death, and so the tame tusked came round and drove the whole herd back again towards the river, but a pile of fifteen was left lying on the ground. Water was brought in long joints of bamboo, and poured over the prostrate elephants. A few recovered, and with the help of the tusked regained their feet and joined the herd, but the greater number of them were dead.

In the evening, after the crowd had gone, the rest of the herd was safely got inside the inner stockade. The next morning the wall was thronged with sightseers, and those who could find no room there crowded into the narrow space between the wall and the stockade itself. The elephants appeared to be resigned to their fate, and some were pouring dust upon their heads and blowing it over their backs with a philosophic air of disregard for their surroundings. The catchers, mounted on the tame tusked, were riding in amongst them. They had ropes of rhinoceros hide, and at one end was a noose which they guided by means of a long bamboo. Having singled out an elephant they seized the moment when one foot was off the ground to slip the noose deftly over his hind leg, and having drawn it tight they threw down the loose end of the rope. Then men ran in between the posts, and catching the rope lashed it to a post. If the wild elephant struggled the tame tusked forced him back, and as he approached the posts the rope was drawn in, until he was tied up against them. Only five or six elephants were caught, and the young tusked were generally the ones to be chosen.

Shortly after midday the herd was let out through the opposite entrance to that through which they had been driven in. Outside they were surrounded by a cordon of spearmen and tuskers, but nevertheless two or three broke away and charged through the crowd, who fled in all directions. This is what the Siamese really enjoy, and they show the most reckless daring, running up to the elephants and dodging away, but generally before the play is over someone gets killed. One of the elephants that escaped was a young tusker, only four feet high. The little fellow was mad with rage, and chased the crowd who danced round him shrieking with delight. This was one of the smallest elephants in the herd, but much younger ones have taken part in the Hunt. Some years ago a baby elephant was actually born in the *paniet*, and ran round under his mother all the time, protected by her from the crushing and jostling. His little woolly body and absurd shrill trumpet soon came to be looked on as the chief feature of the performance.

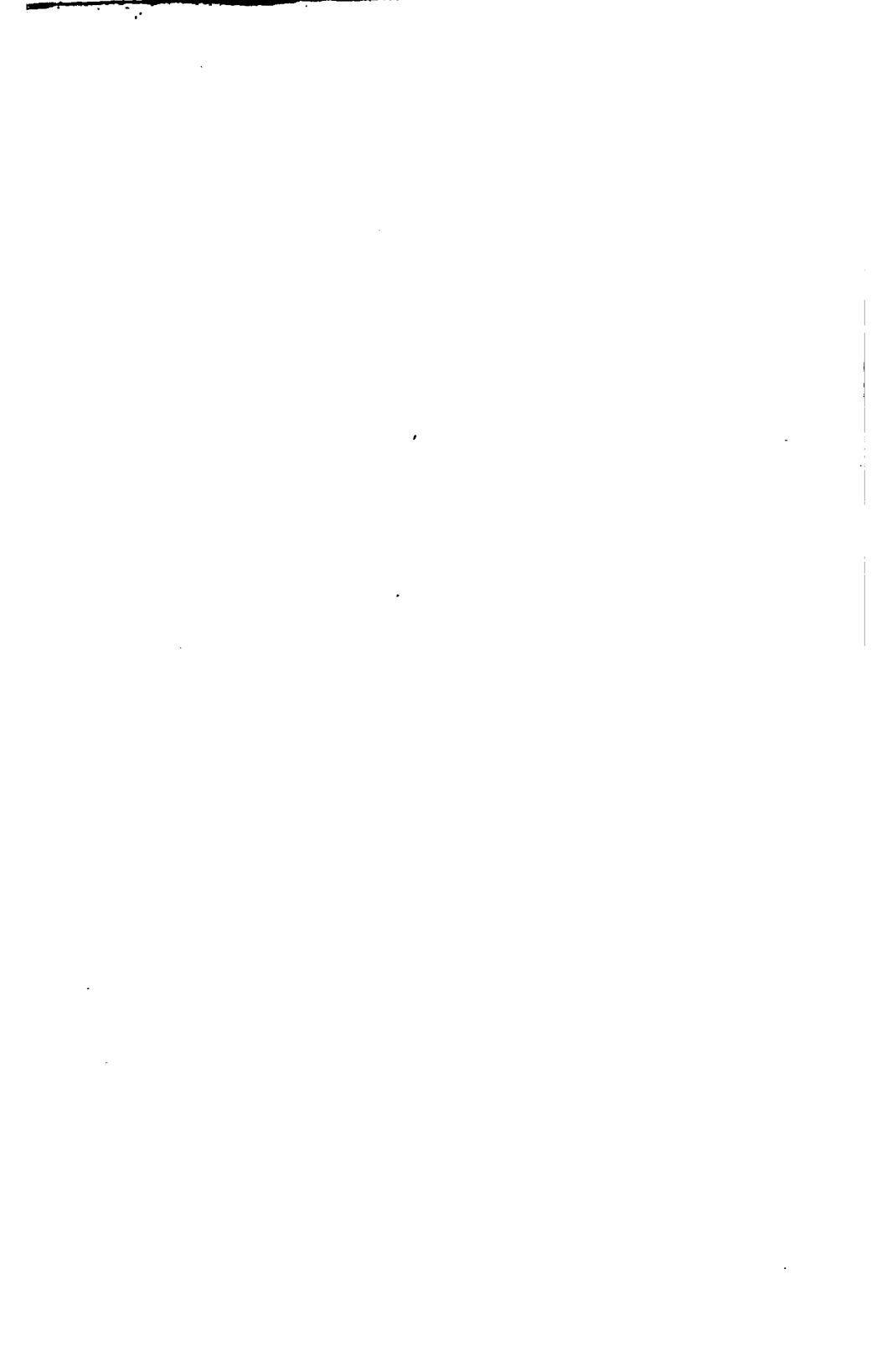
As soon as the herd had been driven out, numbers of Siamese entered the *paniet* to search for any hairs that had fallen from the elephants' tails, for these are powerful charms.

In the afternoon the captured elephants were driven out, the mooring ropes being passed from post to post as they went. Outside the *paniet* a tusker ranged up on either side; a collar of rattan was slipped round the neck of the captive and attached to similar collars on the tame elephants, and so he was marched off to some long sheds, where the elephants were tied up once more to stout posts.



CATCHING ELEPHANTS IN THE PANIET

To face page 228



AYUTHIA AND THE ELEPHANT HUNT 229

There they remain for six weeks, by the end of which time they are quite tame.

Meanwhile the herd was taken to the river to bathe, and all that night they were kept upon the bank, closely surrounded. On the last day of the Hunt the catching goes on in the open. This is an exciting time, for many elephants break away and charge blindly through the neighbouring gardens, while if they find a house in their path they may pick it up, in a fit of annoyance, and throw it into the river; and sometimes the occupants of the house-boats are filled with consternation to find an elephant bearing down upon them.

When all is over the herd is driven away again, with scarcely diminished numbers. The tuskers accompany them until they are safely off the cultivated land, and then leave them to find their way back to their old haunts.

So for many centuries has the King hunted his elephants at Ayuthia. In former days the Hunt was not only a great spectacle but also a serious business, for the van of the Siamese army was composed of elephants of war. Father Tachard tells us that at the time of his visit to Ayuthia the King possessed no less than twenty thousand elephants, not counting those that were wild among the woods and mountains. There was then in the palace a white elephant said to be nearly three hundred years old, which had been the cause of many wars. Father Tachard was taken to see him, and his description of him runs—"He is but little, and so old, that he is wrinkly all over. Several *Mandarins* are appointed to take care of him, and he is only served

in Gold.”¹ We learn that there were altogether one hundred men in the service of this elephant. Of the elephant that was designed to be the successor of the one in the palace, Father Tachard wrote—“This little Elephant is somewhat bigger than an Ox, hath many *Mandarins* in his Service; and for his sake there is great respect shew’d to his Mother and Aunt that are kept with him.”²

It is to be feared that the modern representatives of these famous animals receive but little honour in comparison. Father Tachard makes frequent references to the elephant hunts which took place. His description of the method employed for drawing the wild elephants to the stockade is amusing. “When the day appointed for this Hunting is come Huntsmen go into the Woods, mounted on She-Elephants which are trained to the Game, and cover themselves with leaves of Trees that they may not be seen by the wild Elephants. When they are got pretty forward in the Forest, where they think some Elephant may be, they make the Female give some neys that are proper to attract the Males, who presently answer by dreadful roarings. Then the Huntsmen perceiving them at a vast distance return back again, and gently lead the Females towards the Amphitheatre we mentioned: the wild Elephants never fail to follow them.”³ We also hear how ten or twelve elephants escaped up a mountain when they were being herded together, “and for that purpose made use of a very surprising expedient; fastening themselves by their Trunks to one of the Trees that were upon the side of that very steep Mountain, they made a Skip to the Root

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 172.

² *Ibid.* p. 197.

³ *Ibid.* p. 216.

of the next, and in the same manner clambered from Tree to Tree with incredible efforts, until they got to the top of the Mountain, from whence they saved themselves in the Woods."¹

Another delightful reference to the Elephant Hunt occurs in the Diary of Samuel Pepys. Under the date 17th August 1666, he writes—"Back with Captain Erwin, discoursing about the East Indys, where he hath often been. And among other things he tells me how the King of Syam seldom goes out without thirty or forty thousand people with him, and not a word spoke, nor a hum or cough in the whole company to be heard. He tells me the punishment frequently there for malefactors is cutting off the crowne of their head, which they do very dexterously, leaving their brains bare, which kills them presently. He told me what I remember he hath once done heretofore: that every body is to lie flat down at the coming by of the King, and nobody to look upon him upon pain of death. And that he and his fellows, being strangers, were invited to see the sport of taking of a wild elephant, and they did only kneel, and look toward the King. Their druggerman² did desire them to fall down, for otherwise he should suffer for their contempt of the King. The sport being ended, a messenger comes from the King, which the druggerman thought had been to have taken away his life; but it was to enquire how the strangers liked the sport. The druggerman answered that they did cry it up to be the best that ever they saw, and that they never heard of any Prince so great in every thing as this King. The messenger being gone

¹ *Ibid.* p. 233.

² Dragoman.

back, Erwin and his company asked their druggerman what he had said, which he told them. 'But why,' say they, 'would you say that without our leave, it being not true?' 'It is no matter for that,' says he, 'I must have said it, or have been hanged, for our King do not live by meat, nor drink, but by having great lyes told him.'"



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER XI

LOPBURI, AND THE STORY OF PHAULCON

"When cutting down rattans don't leave the thorns and sprouts ;
When killing the father don't spare the offspring."

Mon Proverb.

ABOVE Ayuthia the railway bends towards the east, and, receding far from the river, passes through country which was formerly uncultivated and covered with stunted trees. Since the opening of the line this country has been turned into rice-land, but though it has been cleared of the undergrowth and bushes the trees have been left, and they remain dotted over the fields in small clumps. At Ban-p'haji the line divides, one branch continuing in a north-easterly direction over the ridge of the Korat hills to the walled town of Korat, while the main line strikes off to the north. At Tarua the main line crosses the Nam Sak, a tributary of the Menam, and ten miles away on our right we see the jagged outline of the Prabat hills. Half-an-hour later another low range comes in view, and we arrive at the ancient town of Lopburi, the Louvo of the French writers of the seventeenth century. This was one of the last strongholds of the Cambodian power in southern Siam, and it afterwards formed an outpost of the advancing Siamese. Much later, when the power of Siam was at its zenith, Lopburi became a favourite residence of King Narai,

who divided his time between this place and Ayuthia.

The town is pleasantly situated on rising ground which commands the surrounding plain, and on one side it is washed by a branch of the river. It is encompassed by a great earthwork, now much overgrown, strengthened with bastions faced with brick. The principal entrance is through a gateway thirty feet in height, an Ogee arch, surmounted by battlements of the typical form of the leaves of the Bo tree. These defences belong to the more recent period of its history. Writing in 1688 Father Tachard says—"They'l set about the Fortifications of *Louvo* as soon as *Bancok* is fortified, which is a place of greater importance, and, as it were, the Key of the Kingdom of *Siam*. These Works will soon be compleated, because an infinite number of Workmen will be employed, and the Ground is easie to be cast up." The plans, we learn, had already been drawn by Monsieur de la Marre, "an able Engineer."¹

It is on record that the work was carried out by companies of a thousand men, each thousand working for a month. It is evident that in those days the population was much more concentrated round large and important centres than it is at present. This arose from two causes, firstly because the people massed for protection, and secondly because the King wished to keep them near him in order that he might employ them on great works of this nature. One result of these large towns was that when the King was absent it was easy to start a rebellion. This in part accounts for the number

¹*Op. cit.* p. 198.

of independent or semi-independent states into which Siam was split. Sometimes one town and sometimes another became the most important, and thus the ruins of each one of them are called the ruins of the old capital of the country.

The King's palace at Lopburi dates from the same period as the walls, and a similar form of arch is employed in the gateways. Hard by the palace is the ruined house of King Narai's great minister, Phaulcon. It consisted of a central portion with a one-storied wing at either end. In the central portion was a cruciform chapel, with circular western window, and the stone altar is still in position.

Probably dating from Phaulcon's time is a section of a round pillar of quartz, with Ionic capital, which lies in an open space near by. It may have formed a portion of the cathedral which he is said to have built, but of which I have found no other traces. In Phaulcon's time copper was worked in the neighbourhood of Lopburi, and the remains of a smelting furnace may still be seen.

Phaulcon also devised the water-works, for bringing water to the palace from the hills eight miles away, through earthenware pipes, no mean engineering feat. Mr. A. J. Irwin has found the reservoirs, covering an area of over three square miles, surrounded by a dam on three sides, and shut in on the east by the sloping ground that leads to the hills. The depth of water must have been about ten feet. There is a sluice gate for letting the water out on the west, towards the city, and another on the north-east side. There are also sluices at two points on the line of pipes. Most of the brickwork of these sluices is still standing. At three

places on the way there are settling tanks, and just within the city wall are two large reservoirs. Mr. Irwin also found the pipe itself, at the place where it crosses the moat. It is at that point a ten-inch pipe, encased in brick. Even more surprising are the old roads on high and wide embankments, which run from Lopburi to the hills.

The most interesting remains at Lopburi date, however, from the earlier period of its history. The railway runs right through the old town, and just beyond the station there stood for many years a dense thicket. Unsuspected among the trees lay buried an ancient temple, but the trees have now been cut down, and the old stonework freed from the clinging embrace of the creepers. The temple is of the Hindu type, and was built during the supremacy of the Cambodians in southern Siam. It is in fact identical in style with the ancient sanctuaries which are found farther east, in Cambodia itself. It consists of three small cubical chambers, entered through low square doorways, and surmounted by blunt spires—possibly dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The chambers are connected by short covered galleries. All this lower part is built of fair-sized blocks of laterite, laid upon each other without cement, whilst the lintels and door-jambs are sandstone monoliths, beautifully fitted. The galleries and chambers are roofed in with great slabs of laterite which project one beyond another, and the upper courses of the spires are overlaid with cement.

Whatever may have been the original dedication of the temple it was at some early date converted to Buddhist uses, for the galleries are full of life-size



AN ANCIENT TRIPLE SANCTUARY
PRA PRANG SAM YOT, LOPBURI



images of the Buddha, very finely carved in sandstone and with sevenfold hooded cobras rising fan-like behind their heads.

We saw in the introduction how the old sanctuaries in Cambodia suffered later additions, and so here, with a barbarous mixture of styles, transepts were built out from the central tower on either side, converting the building into the form of a cross. The brick walls of one transept only are still standing. The gable roof which they supported has long since fallen in. Yet this addition was probably made no earlier than the time of Phaulcon, for the windows and the doorway are round arches, a feature not properly belonging to Indo-Chinese architecture, but which may well have been introduced when European influences were strongly felt. So at the present day in some modern temples we may see a limited use of the arch, though rather as a decorative feature than as part and parcel of the building.

Near by is the great Wat Na Pra Tat, in which the oldest part consists of a platform of laterite in the form of a Greek cross. At the extremity of each arm was a sanctuary of the type already described, connected by a short gallery with a larger tower of the same character, standing in the middle. This was the usual arrangement of a fivefold sanctuary, and the only exception that I have heard of occurs at Pechaburi, where there is a very remarkable group of towers, built at the extremities and point of intersection of the arms of a Latin cross, with no signs of connecting galleries.

The structure at Lopburi is of later date than the threefold sanctuary already described, and the lintels

of the doorways are simply beams of wood. This accounts for the fact that only the central tower and one other are now standing. The towers are covered with an extremely hard but brittle cement, moulded with exquisite finish. Every niche is occupied by figures of the Buddha surrounded by kneeling disciples, while great sevenfold cobras and decorative patterns in low relief wander over the walls. It is extraordinary to see the great piles of laterite blocks lying in confusion all around, whilst the fragile cement looks as fresh as though it had been moulded yesterday. Around this central group of spires were built two courts, one within the other, and in the outer court stood image-houses and *pra chedis*. The *pra chedis* are of an unfamiliar type, with deep recesses in the sides to contain images. The continuity of the walls which enclose the courts is broken by a *bawt*, of which the brick walls still remain. Many of the slender octagonal pillars which upheld the roof are also standing. They were built of bricks shaped into segments of an octagon, and so firmly cemented together that those pillars which have fallen have cracked into two or three large pieces, as a monolith might do. The columns are covered with a layer of cement, moulded into lotus-leaf capitals. As I walked through the courts nothing could seem more deserted, yet suddenly I came upon an offering of flowers, still fresh, laid simply on the ground in this holy place.

At Lopburi I have only seen one temple which contains evidence that it was ever actually used as a Hindu place of worship. Here a flight of steps leads up a rough pyramidal structure, all of laterite, and on this stands a small brick chamber containing an

image of Siva, carved in several pieces out of sandstone.

Closely connected with Lopburi is the name of Constantine Phaulcon, whose history is thus related by Father Tachard.¹

“He is a *Grecian* by Nation born in *Cephalonia*, his Father being a noble *Venetian* the Son of the Governor of the Island, and his Mother a Daughter of one of the Ancientest Families of the Country. About the year 1660, when as yet he was but about twelve years of Age, he had discretion enough to reflect upon the bad condition into which his Parents had reduced the Affairs of his Family. The thought of that made him take a Resolution that could hardly be expected from a Child of his years. Not being able to support his quality in his own Country he went on Board with an *English* Captain, who was returning into *England*.”

There he took service with the East India Company and went out to Siam, where he lived in the family of one Mr White, a considerable merchant.² Having scraped together a small fortune he resolved to start a trading venture on his own account, and for that purpose he bought a small ship. Attempting to put out he was beaten back by bad weather, and was cast away twice in the mouth of the river.

“Putting out again to Sea once more, he was Shipwrecked a third time and much more unfortunately upon the coast of *Malabar*; he was in danger of having perished there, and could not save of all he had above two thousand Crowns. In this sad

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 134 *et seq.*

² As we learn from the *Letters*, cited on p. 26.

condition being oppressed with sorrow, weariness and sleep, he had laid himself down upon the Shore, when, whether he was asleep or awake, for he hath protested to me oftener than once he could not tell himself, he thought he saw a Person full of Majesty, who looking upon him with a smiling eye, most mildly said unto him ; *Return, Return from whence you came. . . .*

"Next day whilst he walked by the Sea side, musing upon what he had seen in the night time, and uncertain what to think of it, he saw a Man coming towards him dropping wet with a sad and dejected countenance. It was an Ambassador of the King of *Siam*, who upon his return from *Persia* had been cast away, without saving any thing but his life."

This proved to be the turning-point in Phaulcon's fortunes. With the two thousand crowns which remained to him he bought a barque in which he carried the ambassador back to *Siam*. Through the friendship of this ambassador he became assistant to the "*Barcalon*," the first minister of State.

"This *Barcalon* was a witty Man, and well versed in business, but he avoided trouble as much as he could and loved his pleasures. It ravished him that he had found an able, faithful and industrious Person on whom he might repose the cares of his place."

Phaulcon was now often brought to the notice of the King, who soon formed so high an opinion of him that on the death of the "*Barcalon*" he wished to put Phaulcon in his place. This, however, Phaulcon besought him not to do, for he feared the envy of the great men about the King. Nevertheless, though not in name, he was in fact the most important person next the King, so that Father



WAT NA PRA TAT, LOPBURI



Tachard wrote : " At present every thing passes through his hands, and there is nothing done without him."

There were at that time many French Jesuits in Siam, and these gained a great influence over Phaulcon. We read in the *Letters*, written by men less favourably disposed towards Phaulcon than was Father Tachard, that "whilst he was in England, and a good while after he had been settled in Siam he was a good Protestant, but when he fell into the Jesuits' hands they soon perverted him, and made him embrace the Roman Catholick Religion, and espouse the French Interest, to that degree of Zeal that proved so Fatal to him at last."

It may have been at Phaulcon's instigation that ambassadors were sent to the Court of Louis XIV., and that monarch, conceiving the project of converting the King of Siam to Christianity, sent back an ambassador, and with him six Jesuits who were on their way to China.

The French embassy was received with every mark of honour at Ayuthia. To the letter of Louis XIV., expressing the hope that the King of Siam would embrace the Christian religion, King Narai returned a dignified answer. After pointing out how hard a thing it was that he was asked to do, he continued : "After all, it is strange to me that the King of France, my good Friend, should so much concern himself in an Affair that relates to God, wherein it would seem God does not at all interest himself, but leaves it wholly to our Discretion."¹

Though unsuccessful in their mission, the various members of the embassy formed a very high opinion

¹ Tachard, *Op. cit.* p. 223.

of the character of the King. Thus Father Tachard—
“The King of *Siam* who Reigns at present is about fifty five years of Age. He is without contradiction, the greatest Prince that ever governed that state. He is somewhat under the middle Stature, but streight and well shaped. He hath an engaging Air, a sweet and obliging carriage, especially to Strangers. And amongst them particularly to the *French*. He is active and brisk, an enemy of idleness and laziness which seems to be so delightful to the Princes of the East, and which they look upon as the greatest Prerogative of their Crown. This Prince, on the contrary, is always either in the Woods a hunting of Elephants, or in his Palace minding the Affairs of his Kingdom. He is no lover of War, because it ruins his People whom he tenderly loves; but when his Subjects revolt, or that neighbouring Princes offer him the least affront, or transgress the bounds of the respect that's due to him; there is no King in the East that takes a more conspicuous revenge, nor appears more passionate for glory.”¹

He appears, also, to have been no less wise than our King Canute, for at the time of the greatest inundation it was an old custom for the king to strike the river with his dagger and command the waters to retire, “But this Prince having found by many years' experience, that the waters encreased sometimes, for all they were ordered to abate, hath left off that ridiculous ceremony.”

A curious side-light is thrown on contemporary European history, for a few days after the arrival of the French embassy at Ayuthia, two solemn services

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 227 *et seq.*

were held in the Roman Catholic Church, the one for the late Queen of Portugal, and the other for the late King, Don Alphonso; and the coronation of Don Pedro, King of Portugal, was celebrated in the Church of the Dominicans. "The Lord *Constance* was at the charges of the Obsequies and Festivals. He would also have had a solemn Service performed for the late King of *England*,¹ if he had had certain intelligence that he died a Catholic. He only expressed his Joy at the Coronation of the Duke of *York* by Illuminations and Fireworks, which for their Novelties pleased the *French* very much."²

The Jesuit Fathers made good use of their time in Siam, and by their observations of a total eclipse of the moon on 21st February 1682, they calculated that the Longitude of Lopburi was $98^{\circ} 32'$ East of Paris, the correct difference being $98^{\circ} 16'$. A Brahmin astrologer at Lopburi "foretold this Eclipse to a quarter of an hour almost; but he was mightily mistaken as to the duration of it."

Here we take leave of Father Tachard, and for the tragic conclusion of Phaulcon's history we must turn to the *Letters*.

It was six years later, in the month of May 1688, that King Narai lay sick in his palace at Lopburi. One night Phaulcon was sent for, and hurrying across from his house he entered the palace. There, by the orders of Opra Pitrachard, Minister of the Household, he was seized and thrown into prison, where he finally died under torture. Simultaneously all the French at Lopburi and Ayuthia were imprisoned. It is needless to recapitulate the events which eventually led to their

¹ Charles II.

² *Op. cit.* p. 184.

release and departure from the country, for these have been touched upon in the introduction. Whether the King's end was hastened or not we cannot tell, but he did not long survive Phaulcon. The revolution was sharp, sudden and complete. Its last pitiful act is quaintly told. "Opra Pit-rachard having dispatched the King's two Brothers, and adopted Son, who were the only Princes that stood in his way to the Crown, caused the young Princess, the King's only Daughter, to be taken and thrust into a large velvet Sack, and her Brains to be knockt out with great Bars of the sweet and so much esteemed Wood in all the Indies call'd Aquila and Calamboar; and then thrown into the River, it being accounted a prophane thing, and a violation of the Sacred Respect due to a Princess of the Royal Blood of Siam, to be put to Death in the usual manner that others are; and therefore they did it with great Deference and distinguishing Ceremonies becoming her Quality not suffering her Royal Person to be polluted with the touch of any vulgar Hand or Instrument of Mortality."



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER XII

THE PRABAT MOUNTAIN

"Better to be bitten by a crocodile than nibbled at by a petty fish."
Siamese Proverb.

THROUGHOUT Indo-China are found the fragments of a vast limestone formation which, in southern Siam, rise in abrupt fantastic peaks straight out of the alluvial plain. Such an outcrop is the Prabat range, where, as on Adam's Peak in Ceylon, a depression in the rock is venerated as a footprint of the Buddha. To this spot thousands of devout Buddhists make a pilgrimage every year, in the month of February, but though the journey can now be made by railway few Europeans have been there. Finding that I was able to get away from Bangkok for a few days I, too, set out to visit the Holy Mountain. I was accompanied by Mr. S. W. Masterman of the Survey Department, and a casual mention of deer induced a mighty hunter of big game, from Burmah, to join our party.

We arrived at Tarua in the evening and slept in an empty bungalow, for the little narrow-gauge train which was to take us on to Prabat did not leave until midday. On the following morning we explored the neighbourhood of Tarua. Up here the river ran between high sandy banks fringed with trees, while on either hand the fields

were covered with patches of scrubby jungle. It was a relief to turn our eyes, wearied with the eternal plains, towards the hills, whose highest point was shrouded in mist. A mile or so from Tarua there is a gigantic image of the Sleeping Buddha. The building which once covered it has fallen in, and the image itself is little more than a shapeless mass of crumbling bricks.

Returning to the station we found our boys busily engaged in getting our things upon the train. They naturally approved most strongly of the expedition, which enabled them to accumulate much merit at small expense. Before we left, the station-master produced small gilt copies of the famous footprint, and with these, in an access of generosity, we decorated our boys.

The train was a primitive affair. The first-class carriage—put on for our benefit—looked like a small copy of a coach on the old Stockton and Darlington Railway. Our boys travelled second, and the third-class passengers and luggage were put in open trucks. We had an uninterrupted view all round; of our boys in the carriage in front, and of the third-class passengers behind. They were a picturesque lot, with long unkempt locks falling about their shoulders, and one of them had a *ken* which he played most of the way. We had not gone more than a mile before a brake-rod under the second-class carriage broke, and the loose end trailed along the line. Presently we came to a station, and everybody crawled underneath the carriage to look. After ten minutes' vigorous hammering all the brake gear was knocked away and we proceeded, the engine

driver remarking that we should get on better without it.

As we neared the hills we entered a dense forest, where the great thorny bamboos made an impenetrable barrier; yet now and then we looked down open glades, and some huge trees seemed to push back the undergrowth from around their feet. A great deal of the charcoal which is used for cooking comes from this district, where it is made out of bamboos. The charcoal-burners' huts are perched on the tops of thick bamboo clumps, to be out of the way of elephants, tigers and thieves. A bamboo pole, on which the stumps of the branches have been left, serves as a ladder to climb up to this arboreal dwelling.

In the heart of the forest we made our second stop, at a tiny attap shed which served as a station. Then emerging from the forest we ran along through a strip of paddy fields, at the foot of the hills. The hills rise to a height of a little over two thousand feet, but from their striking outline they look much higher, and one great double-headed peak which towers up in the background is particularly imposing.

At two o'clock we reached the village of Pra Puttha Bat—the Footprint of Buddha. The name is generally abbreviated to Prabat. We found Mr. N. E. Lowe, of the Survey Department, camped in a curiously-designed wooden structure—something between a house and a *sala*—where he hospitably received us. It was, he said, in this place that coffins were placed during the three days' ceremony which preceded the actual cremation, but this knowledge impaired neither our appetites nor our sleep.

The little village was half hidden amidst gardens, and in the market we were able to obtain Indian corn and delicious custard apples. Close by, on the summit of a rocky knoll, stands the shrine which covers the sacred footprint. Image-houses cluster around the central building, and every little eminence is crowned by a snow-white *pra chedi*.

According to the legend, here once stood a high mountain, in which was a deep cavern filled with gold and precious stones which none might touch. One day a band of robbers resolved to bear off the treasure, and entered the cavern, taking with them a great number of elephants. Having loaded the elephants with the treasure they turned to come out, but at the very moment when the two foremost elephants were emerging from the cavern, the Lord Buddha stepped upon the mountain and crushed it down. The cavern was obliterated, but in a hollow which marks the old entrance can still be seen quite plainly the heads of the two elephants, turned to stone.

A splendid triple flight of stairs leads up to the shrine, each balustrade moulded into the form of a serpent, and terminating in fivefold bronze heads. The shrine itself is a spire-crowned building, with bells forever tinkling under the eaves, and when the richly-decorated roof reflects the sunlight it gleams—as Alabaster says—"like a mass of flames," against the dark green of the wooded hills behind. The building is of the same type as the structure known as a *maradap*, which is erected for a cremation. A very early example of this type may be seen at Wat Pra Tat near Ayuthia: a square building with low-pitched pyramidal roof, whose projecting cornices are supported by pillars. The



THE SHRINE, PRA PUTTA BAT

shrine at Prabat is of no great age, for the footprint itself was only discovered in the year 1602.

Entering through doors inlaid with mother-of-pearl, we found ourselves in semi-darkness. A mat of woven strips of silver covered the floor, and beneath a canopy in the centre was the footprint, a depression four feet six inches in length. The air was heavy with incense, and all around were heaped the tawdry gifts of the worshippers. We were unable to see the actual rock, for a wooden case is let into the footprint and it is lifted only when the King makes a pilgrimage to the shrine. The ordinary pilgrim is content to stick a piece of gold leaf upon the case, to strew it with flowers, and to place lighted candles beside it. Perhaps he also drops a coin into a chink of the rock, and hears it fall, none know where. So, having looked upon the spot where the Buddha trod, he goes forth once more into the light, and, fearful lest the guardian angels of the place may be unheeding, he calls their attention by beating upon the bells which are hung up in little sheds around the shrine and at the foot of the hillock. They are of all sizes and tones, and with every breeze their sweet notes are wafted over the hills: surely the angels must hear.

On the day after our arrival at Prabat we set out with the intention of ascending one of the higher peaks of the range. A dear old Siamese gentleman, in very ragged costume, came with us as a guide. He might pardonably have been mistaken for a coolie, but he was nevertheless a man of some position, and it was necessary to address him as "Your Excellency." Our way lay along a shady road which wound round the foot of the hills.

Presently we came to a shrine which covered an unfamiliar image, bearing a sword. It was the image of a very powerful spirit, the "Lord of the Fallen Mountain." This mountain, we gathered, was long ago destroyed by an earthquake, and it was not the same as that which was obliterated by the Buddha. These legends of mountains overthrown are curious, and no doubt helped to the old belief that the range was of volcanic origin. Our coolies *wai*ed to the image, and plucking leaves from the trees near by, laid them on the ground before it.¹ Then, kneeling, they prayed that no harm might befall them while within the dominions of this spirit. A glade has been cut through the forest, so that the shrine can be seen from the railway, and as the train approaches the engine gives a warning whistle and slows down, in order that the passengers may *wai* to the image. Only on these terms may the modern genii of iron and steam invade the dominions of the mighty Lord of the Mountains.

Beyond the shrine we came out into paddy fields, and here the big game hunter was momentarily appeased by the sight of the tracks of barking deer. On our left a high rounded hill was separated by a narrow cleft from a lower, but much sharper, point, and from this lower point a rocky ridge descended straight towards us. Up this we proposed to climb, but His Excellency assured us that to make our way through the forest, straight to the foot of the ridge, would be impossible. If we followed the path it would, he said, presently bring us right below the peak. We listened to this insidious advice and

¹ *Wai*: the gesture of raising the joined hands.

went on. The path soon plunged again into the forest, but after one promising turn in the right direction it ran on and on, till it became evident that our flanking movement was of a most extended order. At length we began to ascend a spur, and every now and then the coolies were called upon to cut away the tangled undergrowth. Suddenly we came to a cave with the King's monogram cut in the rock above the entrance. This was so obviously the end of our expedition that we all sat down. The King had visited this cave two years before; His Excellency had listened with good-humoured tolerance while we babbled of high hills, but *this* was what we really wanted to see. The old gentleman had made the toilsome ascent like a young man, and he was so pleased with himself that no one could utter a word of reproach.

It was too late to think of mountaineering any more that day, and finding the stump of an old torch, left there by some previous party, we decided to explore the cave. As we entered the first small chamber we were just in time to see our leading coolie squeeze through a narrow opening, and slide silently down out of sight. For some seconds we waited, and then a glimmer came up from below as he lighted our torch and called on us to follow. Entering the narrow tunnel we shot rapidly down over rocks glazed with stalactite, till we were brought up on a sandy floor. Then down a steep passage, which led to another chamber larger than the first, with some fine stalactites depending from the roof. Chamber succeeded chamber, always plunging deeper down, and we were still far from the lowest cavern when we noticed that our torch

was burning low. So we returned to the surface, and made our way back to Prabat.

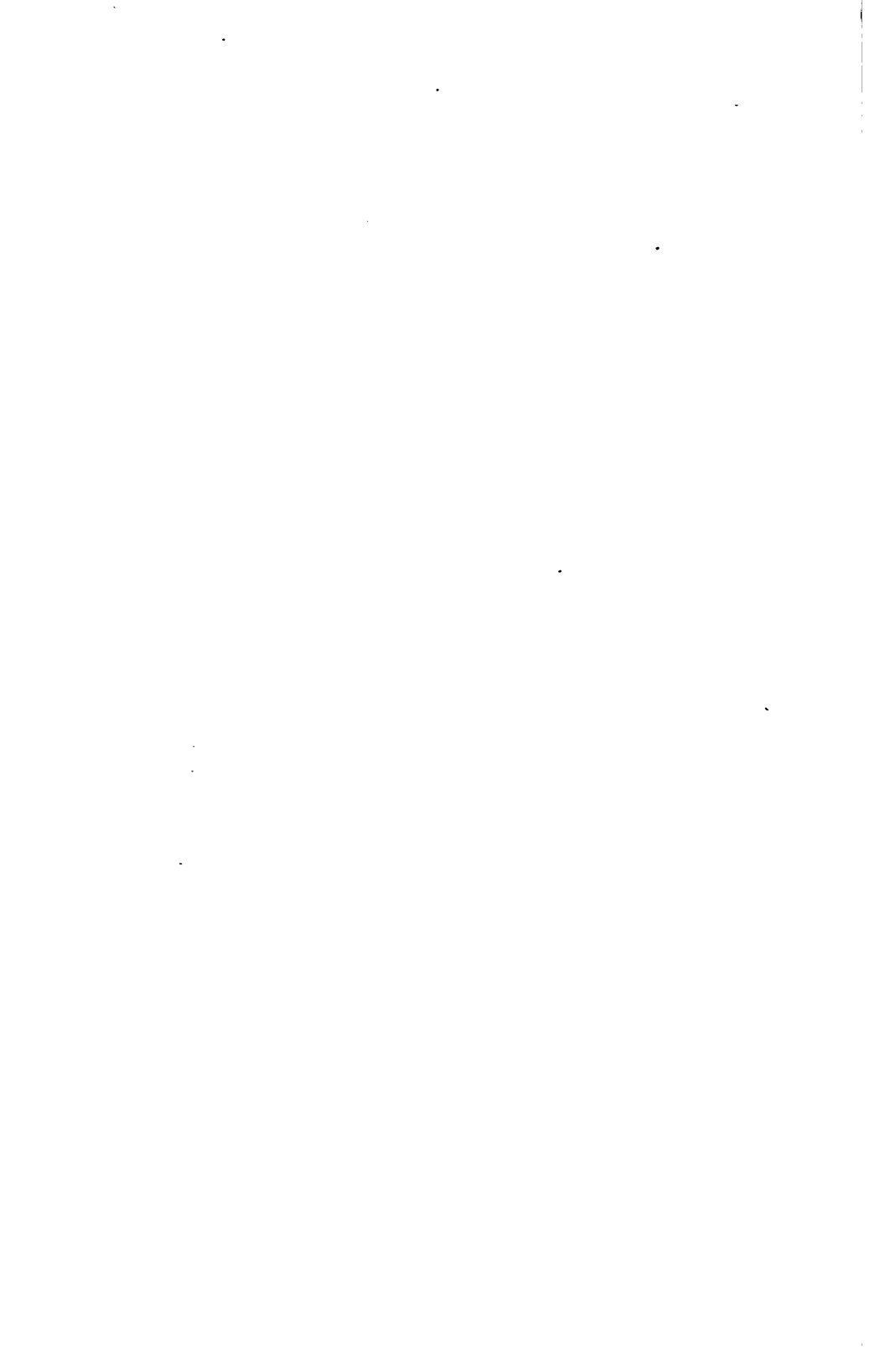
That evening a sense of our shortcoming drove us forth once more, this time with our guns. To my lot it fell to miss a hare, but over the picture of the hunter of big game—stalking a dove which sat upon a bamboo—I would fain draw a veil.

Early next morning His Excellency was waiting for us, outside our camp, and though our faith in him was shaken we felt that it would be cruel to leave him behind. We explained to him that this time we really meant to ascend the sharp peak which we had seen, and with some show of enthusiasm he promised to lead us through the forest to its base. After following the path for some distance we turned up a wide valley, keeping to the dry rocky bed of a stream. The forest here consisted of small clumps of bamboo, whose feathery tops met in a thick canopy overhead, shutting out all view of the hills. Gradually as we went on doubt grew upon us, and as we still continued in the same direction we became certain that our mountain lay far away on our right. We were even thinking of striking off through the forest to look for it when, through an opening in the branches, we saw a sharp rock ridge, some five or six hundred feet above us. A proposal to ascend this ridge, from which we could at least see where we were, was coldly received, and His Excellency flatly declined to attempt the impossible; but eventually Masterman and I with two coolies set our faces to the slope, whilst the others continued up the valley. Most of the coolies were to remain at the spot where we parted, and have



THE PRABAT HILLS

To face page 252



tea ready for us on our return, so we left them collecting sticks.

We ascended rapidly, pushing and cutting through the undergrowth and scrambling up rocks. When crossing some slabs, one of our coolies pointed to a hemispherical depression, which, he said, must have been made by a Pee's head resting there. As we neared the ridge the rocks grew steeper, and on some ledges we found traces of the wild goats which inhabit these hills. Then a luxuriant growth of cactus proved the chief difficulty of the ascent, but crawling through it as best we could, we stepped out on the open ridge, and the view burst suddenly upon us. All round us rose the hills, clothed with dense forest. The peak we had intended to climb lay across an intervening valley, and we had reached a much lower point on a backbone or wall of rock. Two miles away to the north this narrow wall ran up to the summit of a great pillar-shaped mountain, that rose abruptly from the plain. To the south we looked over the paddy fields towards Tarua and Ayuthia, and through an opening to the north-west we saw a forest-covered plain, said to be full of game; and in the far distance a high hill called Hok Salung, or "Eighteen Pence." Eastward the hills overtopped us, and through the gaps we could see still higher hills behind. On the west the range ended in the lower hill behind which lay the village of Prabat.

A hundred yards away, a point on our ridge seemed a few feet higher than that on which we stood, and this point at least we determined to reach. For a short distance we walked along the top of the ridge with a precipice on either hand,

but then we came to a gap which separated us from the higher point. To descend directly into the gap seemed too adventurous, for the rocks overhung. We therefore retraced our steps, and found a chimney leading down from the ridge to a narrow ledge, which ran across the almost vertical face, and enabled us to reach the gap. One of our coolies could not be persuaded to cross the ledge, for he felt that the situation offered an undue advantage to the Lord of the Mountains, who might feel tempted to cast us out of his domain. The ascent from the gap on the other side was easy, but painful, owing to the extreme sharpness of the rocks. They were split into thin flakes which rang with a musical note when struck, and everywhere they were curiously fluted in a vertical direction. We noticed a few fossils, chiefly ammonites.

Having reached the higher point we agreed to call it the summit of the ridge. It looked easy enough to walk on to the pillar mountain, but the sun beat down powerfully on the bare rock, and signs were not wanting that before we reached it we should have melted away, as icicles in mid-summer. It was as though we stood upon the Aiguille Sans Nom, surveying with complacency the distant Aiguille Verte. With such parallels did we satisfy our consciences that we had really climbed a mountain, and as we surveyed our empty water-bottles and our damaged hands we passed a vote of thanks to His Excellency, for having saved us from the more arduous ascent that we had contemplated.

We descended directly from the foot of the chimney by a series of small precipices and broad

ledges, a somewhat steeper way than that by which we had made the ascent. Then, guided by the shouts of the coolies, we went down the slopes till we saw the smoke of the camp fire, curling through the bamboos.

We had not long to wait for the other section of our party. They had ascended the ridge farther on, by a rough path, passing on their way a cave which contained an image of the Buddha hewn in the rock, and to this His Excellency had pointed as the goal of the expedition. Then we picnicked in the woods, and afterwards returned once more to our camp at Prabat; and so, ingloriously, ended our attempts upon the mountains.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER XIII

THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE

"When Death the bitter murderer doth smite
Red roams the unpurged fragment of him, driven
On winds of plague and blight.
But when the mild and just die, sweet airs breathe;
The world grows richer, as if desert-stream
Should sink away to sparkle up again
Purer, with broader gleam."

The Light of Asia.

IN 1905 the railway was opened as far as Paknam Po. For some years the embankment had been completed thus far, and during this time it formed a highway along which a considerable traffic was carried in the dry season, when the mail launches from Bangkok are unable to ply above Chainat, and even small boats stick in the sandy channel. It was in April, the driest, hottest month of the year, that I left Lopburi, accompanied by Mr. H. E. Spivey of the Education Department, with the intention of reaching Paknam Po. The railway was not working for more than thirty miles above Lopburi, but we were taken ten miles farther on a construction train.

For the first part of the way the line ran through rich paddy-land, but above the last station we entered dense bamboo and tree jungle, while the general dead level was varied here and there by some slight undulations and low hills. On our left we passed a wooded hill called Kao Toklee—Polo

Hill—and here, we learnt, the polo championship of Siam was decided in by-gone days. The villagers point out a rectangular clearing on the summit as the field of play, but the ground is so uneven and the slope so great that one cannot but wonder why the ancient sportsmen were not content to play upon the plains.

It was dusk when we were set down on the embankment at the rail head, thirty and odd miles from Paknam Po. Our baggage was divided into fairly heavy loads which were slung on bamboos, and carried between pairs of coolies. Long before we had finished our first short stage night fell, and even the starlight was completely shut out by the thick trees on either hand. After walking for two or three miles we reached a small hut in the forest, where the engineer of this section of the railway used occasionally to sleep out, and here we spent the night. The coolies soon had a blazing fire, which lit up the shadows around, and which served both to cook our dinner and to dispel their fears of tigers and Pees.

We were early afoot the next morning, rambling through the cool dewy grass, while the doves and green parrots were stirring in the trees. Once we stumbled upon an outcrop of laterite, and it may have been from here that the building material for the old temples at Lopburi was obtained. When we returned to our bivouac we had let the best of the day slip by, but we were on a holiday and cared for naught but the immediate present. Still, as we trudged along the scorching embankment we more than once regretted our late start, and in two hours we were glad enough to rest at a collection of grass-

thatched huts, and to make trial of the cooling drinks provided at the native restaurant. Then on again till we reached a small village, and the hospitable house of Mr. A. Goetz, the section engineer. Our statement that we were on a pleasure expedition seemed to him far-fetched, but under his able ministrations we quickly revived. How many coolies had expired in conveying that bottled Bass, that priceless hock, to this oasis, we did not stop to inquire. Suffice it we did justice to them both. A few nights before, our host had fought a battle against a band of dacoits, who were attacking the native village within a few hundred yards of his house. He was filled with grief because he had failed to inflict any loss upon them, and feared that the prestige of the German army might have suffered in consequence. The conduct of the dacoits, in firing at him from behind ant-hills, he considered distinctly unsportsmanlike. He assured us that he had now levelled every ant-hill and cut down every tree within a radius of several hundred yards from his house, with the exception of a single large tree behind which he intended to take cover himself on the next occasion.

On the following day our host provided us with ponies, and with their help we covered the remaining miles to Paknam Po. In one place the road ran through a cutting in a slight elevation composed of quartzite. The place was called "The Hill of Gold," but for what reason I could not learn. There was no record that gold had ever been found there. At various points we passed gangs of Chinese coolies, constructing bridges over the gaps which had been left in the embankment, as an out-

let for the floods in the rainy season. All the rough earthwork was done by Chinese, but for the topping and finishing of the sides of the embankment Laos were also employed. Strangely enough, one of the great obstacles to the more rapid progress of the line itself was the difficulty of getting sleepers. They were cut in the neighbouring forests, and paid for according to their quality at a fixed scale, but it seemed that no regular coolies could be spared for this work, and the supply depended on the casual labour of the few villagers who dwelt in that district.

These, like all Siamese, were content to cut two sleepers or perhaps three, and then, with money in their waist-cloths, off they would trudge to spend it in the gambling-house at Paknam Po.

Already we saw many clearings in the jungle, and now that the line is open this will soon become a great rice-growing district. Every year the country is deeply flooded, and amidst the forest rank grasses grow up through the water ; yet when we made our journey we could find nothing to slake our thirst save at rare intervals a coffee-coloured liquid, contained in the "borrow" pits beside the embankment. Some pools there must be, however, for elephants are reported to be common in the forests. They are much wilder than those on the Nakawn Nayok side, and no attempt is ever made to include them in the great Hunt. There is one jungle to which all the elephants are said to go when about to die. As to its exact position the villagers are a little vague, but of one thing they are sure : that the jungle is so thick and the elephants so fierce that no man can ever go there. Moreover the place is the abode of Pees. The story is common to all

elephant countries, and in Africa, I am told, spots have actually been found covered with the bones of elephants.

Paknam Po is a large floating village situated, as its name implies, at the mouth of the Menam Po, or, rather, at the confluence of the Menam Po and the Menam Ping. The Menam Po is a deep silent river, which is navigable even in the dry season from Paknam Po as far up as the junction of the Menam Yom and Menam Pichai. These rivers drain the flat upper plain of the Menam and the surrounding hilly districts, and the sudden freshets which come down their head-waters are expended in filling the great swamps about Pichit, which act as reservoirs and regulate the inundation of the lower Menam plain. At Paknam Po the rise of the river during the rains is very much greater than in the lower plain, for the water is confined between high banks which, for a time, prevent it from spreading over the surrounding country. The floating houses rise with the river till they reach the tops of their mooring-posts, and then, as the flood still continues to increase, they are moved back to lines of posts set higher up the banks. Then when the rains are over the river gradually sinks back into its deep bed, and the wide floating street contracts to its former proportions.

The Menam Ping, on the other hand, is a capricious torrent whose waters are drawn from a comparatively narrow valley. Its level often changes several feet in a few hours, and in the dry season it is reduced to a shallow stream meandering over a wide sandy bed. The crews of those boats that are compelled to make the journey to Raheng or

Chieng-Mai at this time of year, spend half their days in the water, digging out a channel with wooden spades.

Twenty miles or so above Paknam Po an outcrop of limestone rises sheer out of the arid plain. It looks like some terrific Dolomite, transplanted from the Tyrol, yet every year hundreds of pilgrims, amongst whom are old men and women, make the ascent; here and there receiving a kindly push up the steep rocks, and then stretching forth a helping hand to those below. On the summit there is a footprint of the Buddha, similar to that at Prabat. The hill is honeycombed with caverns which are said to extend for many miles, and like the great caves at Pechaburi they are filled with innumerable images.

Not till we get to Raheng do we really enter the hill country, but here the heavy work begins, as the boatmen pole us up against the strong current through narrow ravines. Some of the hills are of striking outline, and one in particular towers up like a slender column. To it the boatmen point, and tell how, long ago, two angels, male and female, were riding southward from Chieng-Mai upon a single horse. After travelling many days they grew faint with hunger, and the female angel dropped off; but her companion went on, and taking a rod he began to fish. Presently he struck a fish, and heaved it back through the air to where she was sitting. The fishing-rod was the mountain, and fifty miles higher up the fish itself can still be seen, marked on the rocks.

Down the rapids the teak logs come singly, but at Raheng they are made into great rafts. There

are similar rafting stations at Sawankalok and Utaradit, on the Menam Yom and Menam Pichai respectively, and altogether about one hundred thousand logs arrive at Paknam Po every year. The forests are worked on leases by the Borneo Company, the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation and others. Certain restrictions are imposed to prevent the forests from being exhausted, and the lessees pay a royalty of ten rupees on each large log, and six rupees on each small log, that they send down to Bangkok. The logs are inspected and the duty collected at Paknam Po. Many logs break adrift from the rafts, and they are stranded up and down the river. The penalty for defacing the owners' marks on these stray logs is very heavy, and probably very few of the logs that pass through Paknam Po are wrongfully claimed. But when the floods cover the surrounding country it is an easy matter to float an unattached log far away from the river, and many a profitable little sawmill in the jungle is supplied with this stolen timber.

Almost every Siamese whom we met on our walk along the embankment to Paknam Po, carried a gun. Any man who goes into a market with a gun or a jungle knife is liable to arrest, unless he keeps it well wrapped up, and in many districts those who walk out after dark are obliged to carry lights; yet in spite of these precautions brawls are common, and not infrequently end in murder. The neighbourhood of Paknam Po also enjoys an unenviable notoriety for dacoity, although this species of lawlessness is by no means confined to that part of the country.

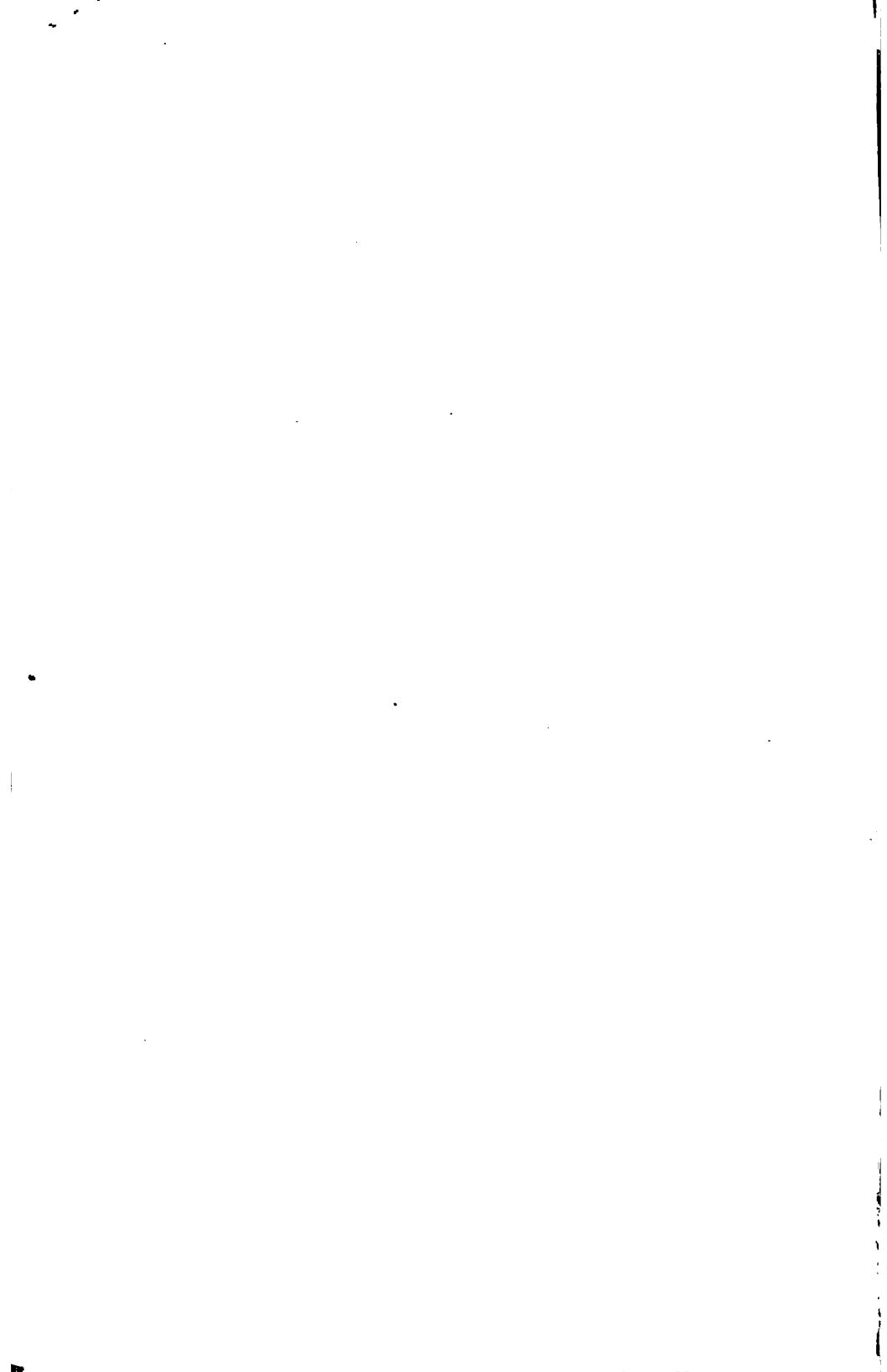


AT THE DOOR OF A TEMPLE

To face page 262



COCOANUT PALMS



In some of the wilder districts bands of outlaws retreat to the jungle, and levy a regular toll upon the surrounding villages. The villagers appear on the whole to regard them with good-natured tolerance, as long as they do not exact too much. So far from information of their whereabouts being volunteered to the authorities they are often sheltered by the villagers. I know of a case in which the leader of such a band—with a price upon his head—lived quietly in a certain village. Every Siamese for miles around knew all about him, and he was related, by marriage, to half the farmers in the district. One day the officer of the local gendarmerie happened to be passing through the village, and stopped to converse with one of the village elders. The old man let slip something which aroused the officer's suspicions, and by close cross-questioning he elicited the fact that a notorious dacoit was living in the village. From the broad grins on the faces of the officer's own men it may be surmised that it was no news to them. In great excitement the officer set forth to catch the dacoit, but long before he arrived at the man's house, word had been sent, and the dacoit had slipped away.

More serious, and far more exasperating to the villagers, are the irregular raids or *plons*. On a fine moonlight night a band of twenty or more collect at some prearranged spot. There are some regular robbers amongst them, but many young fellows, no doubt, join purely for the fun of the thing. Their object is generally to make a raid upon their neighbours' buffaloes or bullocks, so they march off and surround the village which they have selected. Sometimes they are able to get away

with their booty before the barking of the pariahs has fairly aroused the sleeping inhabitants, but should these be more on the alert a pitched battle takes place. They are armed only with rusty old muzzle-loaders, and often after an hour's firing no one on either side is hurt. This is not altogether to be attributed to the badness of their weapons or of their marksmanship, for the villagers are firing from behind their houses, and the dacoits are skilful at taking advantage of such cover as the ground offers. They execute concerted movements without audible words of command, and, indeed, these midnight marauders probably possess greater military instinct than any other section of the community. One ingenious device by which they save much time in loading, and so increase the rapidity of their fire, is for each man to carry a number of charges of powder and ball ready measured out, and contained in short lengths of bamboo. The open end of the bamboo is closed with a thin layer of mud, which breaks when it is clapped upon the muzzle, allowing the charge to fall down the barrel. After a *plon* these bamboo joints may be picked up like empty cartridges on the field of battle.

By the rules of the game, the first side that suffers a serious casualty ought to run away, but occasionally fights of a more stubborn character take place. If the dacoits are worsted and unable to bear away their dead, they at least endeavour to cut off the heads of those who have fallen. By disposing of the head they lessen the chance that the dead man may be recognised, and so his boon companions may return to their village, and live unsuspected.

If, on the other hand, the dacoits succeed in driving off the cattle, the villagers speedily summon their neighbours and organise a pursuit. In the rainy season it is easy to follow the tracks across the muddy fields, but let them beware lest they tread upon sharp bamboo splinters, which the dacoits leave behind them. These splinters can make a nasty festering wound in a bare foot. The dacoits generally make for a patch of high ground on which no marks will be left, and from this they drive the herd out and back again on every side, thus making a great number of tracks going and returning, and confusing their pursuers as to the true direction which they take. Once in their own district the dacoits break up, and each man leads back a buffalo to mingle inconspicuously with his own herd. The dacoits are careful never to attack those who would cause a big Government inquiry to be made, and there is little doubt that they are often hand-in-glove with the local Nai Ampurrs.

Though murder and dacoity are not uncommon forms of crime, the death sentence is rarely passed in Siam, and still less often carried out. Executions are public, but not very many, even amongst the Siamese themselves, have ever seen one; for the place of execution is known only to a few, and in Bangkok it always takes place at the first streak of dawn. It was quite by chance that once, as I was travelling far up the Bangpakong river, beyond Pachin, I passed a boat full of soldiers with a prisoner in their midst, and found that the man was to be beheaded that day at the next *wat* upon the river bank. No secrecy seemed to have been ob-

served here, for there were more than a hundred people assembled when I landed, and amongst them the Governor of the district. When the condemned man arrived he was handed over to the monks, who spent the morning in preaching to him, but he appeared to derive little comfort from their words. When this was over he was allowed to ask for anything that he wanted, but he only desired a little rice. It is said that condemned men are often given opium, but this man had none. It seems that he had been lying in prison under sentence of death for two years, and this delay, which is perhaps the most objectionable feature of the whole business, is not uncommon.

During the morning the executioners built for themselves a little room of leafy boughs. It was to be the "green-room" for the succeeding tragedy, and in the centre of the stage they had planted a bamboo, with a cross-piece about two feet from the ground. To this the condemned man was led. He sat cross-legged on the ground with his back to the bamboo, and his arms, closely pressed against his sides, were tied at the elbows to the cross piece; but with this exception he was left free to move. Then one of the executioners, kneeling beside him, filled his ears with clay and gave him lighted joss-sticks to hold. At times, also, he appeared to stroke the condemned man's face, almost as though he were trying to mesmerise him, but if such were his object it was of no avail, for the poor wretch was quite unnerved and the joss-sticks fell unheeded to the ground. Now the second executioner came out, dressed in red with a red band bound round his forehead, and carrying a sword. He advanced until

the condemned man could see him out of the tail of his eye, and there, some twenty yards away on the man's right hand, he sat upon his heels, and appeared to await the moment when he should strike. Thereafter the condemned man kept his head turned towards him, looking over his right shoulder.

Meanwhile the first executioner had swiftly run back and donned the red dress. He now entered the wide ring of spectators almost directly behind the condemned man, but during his stealthy advance he kept always on his left hand. *Wai-ing* once to the governor, and then raising his joined hands to heaven, he took his sword—a long slightly curved blade broadening towards the point, with thick heavy back and edge keen as a razor. Then he danced out with half-a-dozen prancing steps on tiptoe, and stopped with one foot in the air. His sword was held above his head, one hand grasping the handle and the other fingering the point. So, in a series of little rushes, varied by extraordinary posturing and twirling his sword, he crept nearer and nearer to his unsuspecting victim, amidst a silence that was painful. At the end his movements were so rapid that we could scarcely follow them. He was well out of striking distance when there came a quick rush, a circle of light in the air and a sudden jet of crimson. He had not paused for the fraction of a second to take aim, but the head was severed with that single blow.

When all was over the monks came out again, and chanted over the dead man. They held a strip of cotton stuff, and allowed one end to hang down

and rest upon the body. Then the body was laid in a grave already dug near by, while the head was stuck upon a pole and left as a warning to evil-doers, after the good old English custom.

Beheading with a sword appears to be an excellent method of carrying out the death sentence as long as the executioner is expert, but, unfortunately, such is often not the case. Sometimes several men are executed together, as happened a few years ago, after a most brazen case of *plon*, when in broad daylight and within a few miles of Bangkok a party of men entered a gambling-house, shot down several people and walked off with the money. In China a single executioner will unconcernedly mow off a whole row of heads in a few minutes, but in Siam a separate executioner is appointed for each man, and thus inexperienced jailors are occasionally called upon to wield the executioner's sword. It is scarcely surprising that they should nerve themselves to the unaccustomed task by drinking spirits, and ghastly scenes have taken place.

As a rule the second executioner is not called upon to play the part of a decoy, for the condemned man looks at the joss-sticks stolidly enough. Only if the executioner fears that he will look round, and so spoil his aim, is this method resorted to for keeping the condemned man's attention fixed. In the case that I have described, I believe that the man was really deceived, and until the blow actually fell he thought that his executioner was sitting twenty yards away. It is evident that this method depends for its successful accomplishment upon the very fact

that it is seldom adopted, but in one respect it would seem to be most merciful, for by it the condemned man is spared the worst suspense of the last few seconds, during which he waits in terror whilst his executioner is creeping up behind.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER XIV

THE FRAGMENTS OF AN EMPIRE

"That Splendour issuing from the Sun on high
That quickeneth and enlighteneth the World
I am. I permeate the soil, and plants
From me draw all their vital energy.
I am the Fire of Life whose molten stream
Runs in the veins of every living thing ;
And I am seated in the hearts of all,
And from me Memory and its absence spring."
The Bhagavad Gita, or Song of the Lord Krishna.

THROUGHOUT the province of Nakawn Chaisi are scattered the ruins of some of the most ancient cities in Siam. If we were to believe that they all flourished at the same time, it would follow that the population of this part of the country must at one time have been vastly greater than at present ; but it seems certain that these are the ruins of successive cities, which rose to importance upon the river bank, and dwindled and were finally abandoned, as the river cut for itself a new channel and receded from their walls. The first in size, as in point of time, was undoubtedly that great city which stood on the site of modern Prapratom. Here, over an area of two miles square, the ground is covered with mounds, and if we dig down we come upon bricks and square-hewn blocks of laterite. Prapratom is now ten miles from the river, but fifty years or so ago communication with the river was restored, by cutting a *klong*. For some way the sides of this *klong* are faced with blocks of laterite, dug from the ruins. Within the last

few years a railway from Bangkok has been carried through Prapratom, and on to Pechaburi. The Local Government offices at Prapratom are on a finer scale than in most provincial towns; roads have been made, and water from an artesian well laid on in pipes, and the place is being turned into a fashionable resort by the aristocracy of Bangkok.

Of the ancient temples there remain only the shapeless mounds of which I have spoken, and the *pra prangs* of Prapratom and Prapratawn, which date from the seventh century.¹

About the year 1860 a vast bell-shaped *pra chedi* was built over the *pra prang* at Prapratom. This *pra chedi*, which is 370 feet in height, is the largest in the country. It is covered with golden tiles, and when the rays of the setting sun fall upon it, it glows like a beacon for many miles across the fields, gladdening the heart of the wayfarer as he trudges homeward. The *pra chedi* was built entirely of bricks dug up from the ancient ruins, and thirty-five kilometres of the railway were ballasted from the same source. In one of the many courts of the temple there are placed some interesting stone carvings which were dug up during the construction of the railway. Amongst these is a *Lingam*, consisting of a stone trough about four feet in length, at one end of which there was a column, but the column is now broken. There is also a fine example of the *Chakka*, which here clearly takes the form of a pair of chariot wheels. These casual finds promise a rich reward to any archæologist who would make systematic excavations here.

¹ Colonel Gerini gives A.D. 656 as the date of Prapratawn, *op. cit.* p. 219.

Two and a half miles away from the great Prapratom pagoda is the *pra prang* at Prapratawn, which can still be seen. The pyramidal base of laterite no doubt formed part of the original structure, but the brick spire which surmounts it must often have been restored.

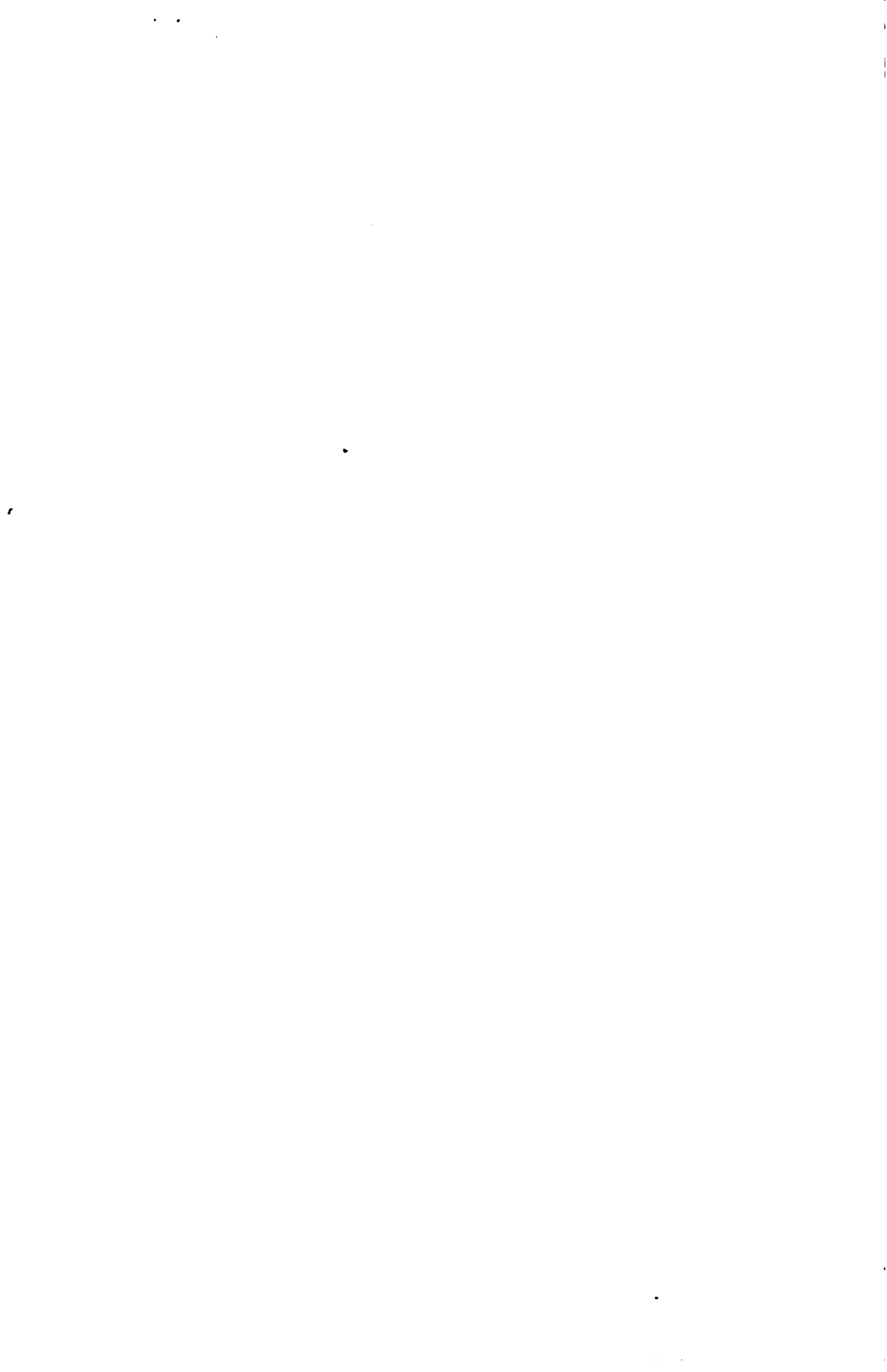
There was once a King who reigned over Prapratom, and to him a son was born. Great were the rejoicings ; but suddenly a gloom was cast over the company as an unbidden guest appeared in their midst, and prophesied that when the new-born prince grew up he would slay his father, Thereupon the King resolved to get rid of his son, yet he would not have the guilt of blood upon his head, so he caused him to be set adrift on the river in a cradle made of lotus leaves. Yet by a miracle the cradle floated safely, and when those who had carried out the King's orders had gone away, the prince's mother drew him to the bank. Then she gave him to a woman named Yai Hom, who brought him up in ignorance of his true birth. In after years the prince saw that the King was a cruel taskmaster, so he collected together a great army. With this he returned, and having overthrown the King's army and slain the King, had himself crowned in his stead. Then Yai Hom told him how he was the King's son, and now the lawful King of the country ; but he was enraged that she should have permitted him to commit so great a sin as to slay his own father, and in revenge he slew her too. Then remorse overtook him, and he built the spire at Prapratom in memory of his father, and at Prapratawn he built a spire in memory of his foster-mother, Yai Hom.

This is the story as the peasants tell it to this day



THE PRAPRATOM PAGODA

To face page 272



around Prapratom, and some miles away there is the village of Kok Yai Hom, where they say the prince was brought up by his foster-mother.

M. Aymonier, who gives as his authority the *Annals of the Kingdoms of the North*, tells us that the King who was slain was P'hya Kong, who reigned at Kanburi on the Meklong in the year 1210 A.D. The prince, whose name was P'hya Pan, grew up in ignorance of his true birth at Ratburi. He afterwards persuaded the chief of Ratburi to rebel against the suzerain lord, and in the ensuing struggle P'hya Pan killed the King his father in single combat. The slaying of his foster-mother and the building of the expiatory spires at Prapratom and Prapratawn then took place as already described, but it is certain that these spires are of much older date than that given in this version of the legend.

Around the great *pra chedi* which now covers the spire at Prapratom there are many image-houses. One of these contains an ancient stone statue of the first King of Prapratom—the King who was slain by his son, according to the legend. In another there is a finely modelled group, of modern workmanship, representing the baby prince floating down the river on a lotus leaf, while his mother and foster-mother stand on the bank adoring him.

Prapratom lies in the midst of jungly country interspersed with plantations of bananas, green vegetables and tobacco, while a coarse variety of cotton is also grown there, and used for stuffing mattresses. Eastward we come to the paddy fields which border the river. On the south a great bamboo jungle stretches to the salt marshes on the coast, and to the north-west the country is covered with forest. A

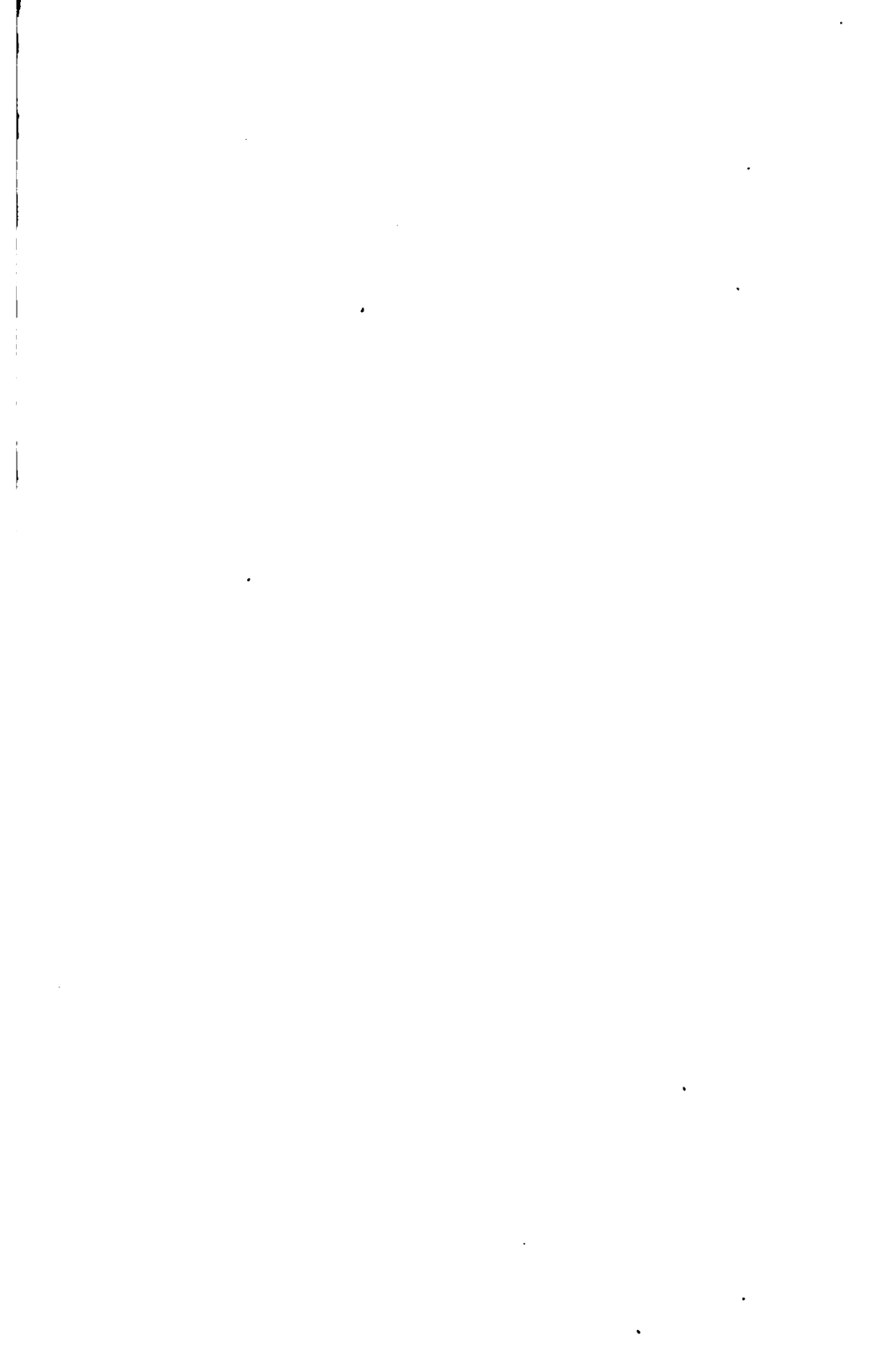
day's march into the jungle in this last direction is the sacred spot Praten, where on a large slab of rock, beneath the great trees, the people believe that the Buddha breathed his last on earth. Buddhist scholars from other countries may tell them that the Buddha never set foot in Siam, but they know that that cannot be true, for has he not left his footprint on the Prabat Mountain?

So hundreds of pilgrims go to Praten every year, and their own wise men, who may know the truth of the matter, do nothing to shake their faith; for all these things help to keep the Buddha's teachings alive in the hearts of the people. At Praten there are no relics of the Buddha, for after his cremation there was a great fight to obtain possession of his bones. At length a pious Brahmin quelled the struggle and placed the bones in a golden vase, which Pra In took up into heaven.

If we follow the Tachin river northward from the mouth of the *klong* which leads to Prapratom, we pass through a narrow strip of cultivation. On the left bank the fields end, a mile or so away from the river, in the great waste of jungle grass which lies to the north-west of Bangkok. I was told that there were elephants in this district, and that it behoved one to be careful how one spoke about them, for Pees dwelt in their ears and they could hear all that was said. Moreover there was one white elephant which had been known to suddenly disappear when men approached him, and when next he was seen it was in quite another part of the country. This faculty is not confined to white elephants, for even amongst our innocent-looking boatmen who knows but that there may be one



THE KLONG AND MARKET, PRAPRATOM



who can vanish at will? So at least I have been told by Siamese.

As long as the elephants refuse to materialise there is little to attract us on this side of the river, but the country on the west is more interesting. Let us leave the river again some twelve miles north of our starting-point, and see what lies to the westward. There is a little *klong* which leads us through the paddy fields, but the reeds which fringe its banks encroach so far upon its narrow waters that even in a small boat the coolies are soon obliged to give up *chao-ing*, and take to punting us along. A few miles from the river we find ourselves in the midst of a great chain of marshes which stretches north and south, and in all probability forms part of the old bed of the river. In very dry seasons tiger, deer and pig come from the jungle farther west, to drink at these pools. We pass one or two dilapidated fishing villages, standing on piles in the water, and occasionally we come to a patch of higher ground where it is possible to cultivate a few *rai* of paddy.

In this corner of Siam there is a large colony of Laos, the descendants of former captives, who maintain their own customs. We can recognise their settlements from afar, for the houses have wide semicircular verandahs at each end, which give them something the appearance of beehives. The girls, in their dark striped petticoats, look very picturesque, and far from copying the Siamese fashion of cutting their hair short they wear it coiled in a pile upon their heads, in a way that would not look out of place in a London drawing-room. Whilst the Siamese always choose the path of

least resistance and cultivate the river banks, these Laos seem to prefer to get back into the jungle, where their greater energy finds an outlet in clearing off the stubborn growth, before they can plant their rice.

When a young couple are about to get married the whole village turns out, and assists to build them a house. Then the young man gives a feast to all his friends, and afterwards they go to fetch the bride. In the procession they bear an ark which contains rice, an axe, a ploughshare and other implements. This is to signify that the bridegroom is a good worker, and able to provide for a wife. Having arrived at his father-in-law's house, the bridegroom seizes his bride by the hand and runs off with her to their new home, followed by a chaffing crowd of girls.

The canoes which are used in the marshes, both by Laos and Siamese, are surprisingly primitive—just a section of a palm trunk, with the inside scooped out. The bulging base of the trunk forms the stern in which the solitary paddler sits, and so keeps the open bow out of the water. In such a canoe we can explore the narrow creeks and waterways, cut through the reeds. Sometimes we have to find a way around a fish-trap and sometimes we are stopped by a floating weed, which seems to skim in little green rosettes over the surface, but which trails a long length of root below. Often it collects in great masses, choking up the whole of our lane, and then there is nothing for it but to get out and push. Our feet sink into the mud below, the weed clings around us till it seems that we are dragging the whole entangled mass along,

and in our wake it closes up again as solid as before.

Here and there are open spaces of water, fringed with silvery grasses which glisten in the sunlight. The place is the haunt of countless waterfowl. As we paddle along, a brown cloud of teal rises from the margin and flies away ; but presently they turn and come back straight towards us, and the air seems to quiver with their beating wings. Or with a hoarse cry a heron springs from the rushes, and flaps away with his legs sawing up and down in ungainly fashion.

A little farther on a forest of long necks appears. We can approach quite closely, but at length a mass of silvery white, edged with sable, surges from the bed of reeds and with the clashing of a hundred pinions a flock of storks mounts heavenward. At a great height they begin to circle, slowly, still rising till they become mere specks. But another and another flock have followed in the wake of the first, and they too are circling in reverse directions. So they cross and recross each other, and we follow them with our eyes to seemingly infinite depths while watching the mazes of that wonderful flight.

Beyond the great marshes we come once more to cultivation, invaded by patches of jungle. Still farther west we enter a region of scrub bamboo, and this at length gives place to forest. The forest belt appears to extend north and south, and covers the low hills which form a distinct watershed between the Tachin river and the Meklong, in contrast to the cup-shaped plains which separate the Tachin river from the Menam, and the Menam from the Bangpakong river on the east.

If the marshes really mark the position of the old river, we should expect to find some traces of ancient cities in their neighbourhood, and, in fact, upon the banks of the small *klong* which I have described, and in the jungly country just to the west of the marshes, there is a place now known as Muang Tum, where mounds of brick and laterite attest the civilisation which flourished here, long before the Siamese descended from the hill country to the plains. Farther west the natives tell of old walled cities, now buried in the jungle. Many temples were built in comparatively recent times, and their remains are scattered over the face of the country. Sometimes as we push through the thick undergrowth we come upon an image of the Buddha, long since forgotten, whose shrine has crumbled into ruins around him. There he sits, far from the eye of man, keeping his long watch over the jungle.

Returning to the Tachin river and proceeding northward, we come to Klong Song Pi Nong, which flows in from the west. This is a great fishing centre, and the water-way is almost choked with the weeds grown to harbour fish. Upon the banks of the *klong* there is a large Annamese population, who are Christians, and the French mission has established a little church in their midst. They do not intermarry with the Siamese, for they are all registered as French subjects, and the paternal French Government imports girls from Annam to be their wives. The French priests in Siam lead devoted lives and never think of returning to their own country, but, from the time of Phaulcon to the present day, they cannot wholly be acquitted of the



THE GREAT SEATED BUDDHA
PRA REH RAI, SUPAN

To face page 278



charge of mingling political intrigue with missionary zeal.

Above this point the Tachin river soon dwindles to a shallow stream, and in the dry season the rice boats are unable to get up as far as Supan, but remain at a village a little lower down. There they collect in a long line, blocking up the deepest part of the channel, while the carts which bring the rice drive into the shallow water and stand beside the boats.

Supan is now no more than a collection of thatched cottages, but the extensive ruins of old temples show that it must once have been a great city. The chief sight is a temple which stands a mile from the river bank. It cannot be more than two or three hundred years old, at the most. The principal building is a narrow but very lofty image-house, of the familiar type. Within, at the far end, sits a gigantic image of the Buddha, but for a moment we fail to grasp the full wonder of the sight, for we must crane our heads backward in order to see higher than his knee. He is seated as upon a chair, and represents "The Buddha in the Jungle." Upon the wall at his side is portrayed a kneeling elephant, raising towards him an offering in its uplifted trunk. Full seventy feet above, the Buddha's head is dimly seen shrouded in the gloom of the roof, amidst the wheeling bats. The image is built of brick, and it is said that it is actually sitting upon the stump of a huge tree (*mai takien*). At the time of the Songkran festival the monks mount by ladders to the roof, and copious libations of water are poured over the great image.

There are many *wats* in various parts of the

country dedicated to "The Buddha in the Jungle," but of them all this is the chief. Some monks make a vow, which lasts for two or three years, never to sleep under a roof unless it be in such a *wat*.

In another building of this same temple there is a large block of stone, which every pilgrim who comes to see the famous image endeavours to lift ; but only those who have made much merit can succeed.

Yet another shrine in Supan contains a stone image of Siva, which is possessed of miraculous properties, for long ago it is said to have floated down the river from Pitsunalok, and stranded at this spot.

Eight miles west of Supan the old town of U T'hong, now quite deserted, stands upon a reach of the old river which is there still navigable, forming a continuation of Klong Song Pi Nong. It is said that the city was abandoned on account of a pestilence, and to this day it is a place accursed and a fever of a peculiarly malignant kind is bred there. I was unable to go myself and examine this place, but Mr. J. Michell of the Survey Department has told me that it is surrounded by an embankment, similar to that at Lopburi. Within all is overgrown with jungle, amidst which are some artificial ponds, filled with crocodiles. The only architectural remains are some *pra chedis*, which, from their appearance, can scarcely have been built as long ago as the time of that King U T'hong who founded Ayuthia. Nevertheless the city dates back to the period of Cambodian supremacy. During his visit to U T'hong, Prince Damrong obtained

some ancient coins bearing the emblem of a conch shell, which were said to have been dug up there. Similar coins have been found at Prapratawn. In the paper to which I have referred on page 24, Prince Damrong points out that Supan or Suvar-naburi, and Kanburi—names which can both be translated by "The City of Gold"—were probably founded by men who came from U T'hong or Suvarnabhumi—"The Origin of Gold."

North of Supan the Tachin river is an insignificant stream, running through rough jungly country. On the left bank a conical hill rises to a height of about five hundred feet, and on the artificially flattened top there stands a little temple. The walls are built of the schist obtained from the hill itself, and the low-pitched roof is covered with slabs of the same material. The windows are narrow grills, an unusual form which may also be seen at Lopburi.

On the opposite side of the river there are two similar conical hills, side by side. To account for their presence the natives tell how the King of the country once loved a beautiful village maiden, and bore her off to the top of the hill on which the temple now stands; and there for a time they lived happily together. But the idyll could not last for ever; at length the King returned to his palace, and for many years he thought no more of her. One day, however, he was passing by the spot, when he noticed several boys playing together and amongst them two very handsome youths. He stopped and asked them who they were, and from their reply he knew that they must be his own sons. Then, pointing to the younger boys, he said, "But

who are these?" And they answered that the boys were their half-brothers. Enraged at the infidelity of his former love, the King sought her out, and took her to the top of the hill. Then drawing his sword he cut off her breasts and flung them far away, and there they may be seen to this day.



FROM THE BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

CHAPTER XV

ANGKOR TOM

"They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors; but they have left us their adoration."

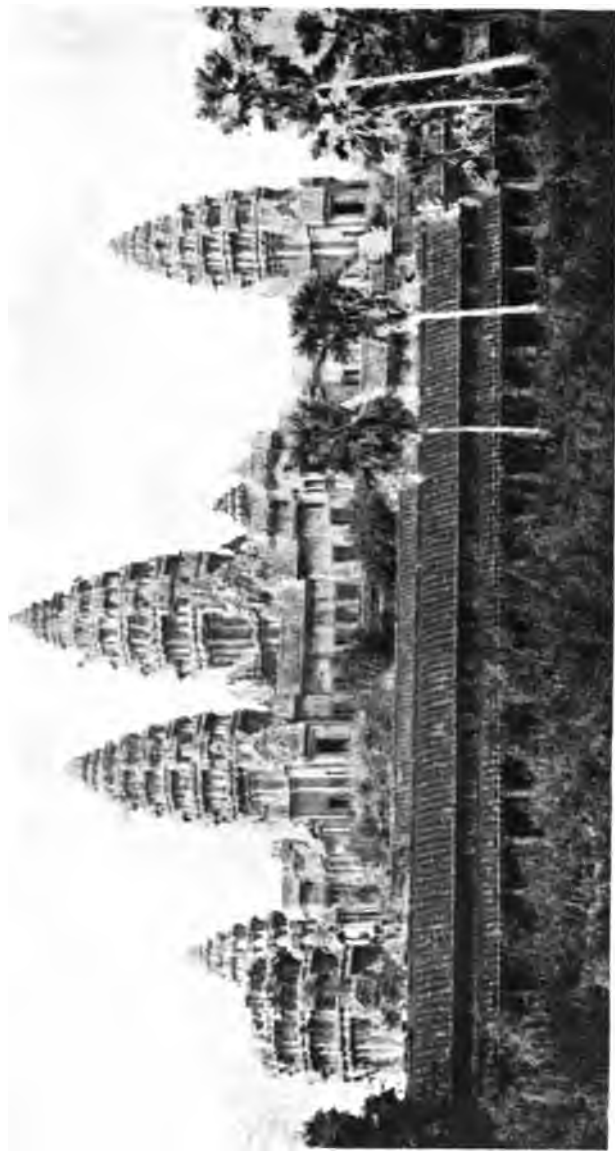
The Seven Lamps of Architecture.

FOUR days by sea from Bangkok brings us once more into the track of the mail steamers, at Saïgon. This was to be my starting-point for Angkor, for the overland route in bullock carts is very long and tedious; so it was from the deck of the little *Donai* that I saw, for the last time, the busy Bangkok river. On the first day out we passed Chantabun, which for many years after the affair of 1893 was occupied by a French garrison. Some hours later we dropped anchor off the little town of Krat, ceded to France as a trading station since the evacuation of Chantabun. The next morning we stopped for a few hours at Kampongsom, a pretty bay shut in by wooded hills, with wooded islets to seaward. Three lighters came off to the *Donai*, and while we were taking in a cargo of pepper from them I went on shore. We were now in French territory, and one of the other passengers took me to call upon the local magistrate. He turned out to be an enormously fat Chinaman, who insisted on opening a bottle of champagne for us—at ten o'clock in the morning.

During the greater part of the following day we

were out of sight of land, but late in the afternoon we skirted a rocky coast with bold bluffs, scantily clothed with vegetation. It was the island of Pulo Condor, a French penal settlement. The night was rough, and our little steamer rolled heavily in the waves which swept straight in from the China Sea. It was our custom to sleep on deck, in long chairs, but on this night our slumbers were broken ; for every now and then a lurch would send us flying into the scuppers. When day broke we were in the Saigon river. One poor fellow who had come on board at Kampongsom was missing, and he must have fallen overboard during the night. The river was crowded with small colliers, belonging to the Russian Baltic fleet, and there, too, was the cruiser *Diana*, that had made good her escape from Port Arthur, running the gauntlet of Togo's fleet. The Russian officers and bluejackets wore a jubilant air, for though they might take no further part in the struggle they felt the near presence of the great fleet of warships, which was even then lurking in Camranh Bay. No premonition crossed their minds of that fatal day, then drawing nigh, when in the Tsu Shima Strait it was swept utterly out of existence.

It would be hard to find a greater contrast to Bangkok than Saigon, whose broad well-kept boulevards, and fine stone buildings, seem as though they had been transplanted straight from Paris to the East. From eleven o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon the shops are closed, and all the town sleeps ; but at evening orchestras play in the brilliantly lighted cafés, and on the pavement groups of Frenchmen sit round marble-topped tables,



THE NAKAWN WAT

To face page 284

sipping absinthe. Pneumatic-tyred 'rickshaws, of a splendour undreamt of at Singapore, flit past, drawn by neatly attired French-speaking Annamese; and little Annamese boys politely offer the latest edition of the evening paper. With these exceptions the natives are carefully kept to their own quarter, two or three miles away. Only when I began to do my shopping did the glamour fade. I then realised the fact that there is a very high tariff, and I could obtain absolutely nothing that was not of French manufacture.

At half-past six in the morning I left Saigon by train, and at first we seemed to be passing through another city—of the dead—for the country was dotted all over with the innumerable graves of the Annamese. In two hours we arrived at Myt'ho, and went on board a river steamer. Then, for a day and a night, we journeyed through a land of mist and fog—where the Mekong rolls its mighty flood—and so to Pnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Everywhere I noted the same orderliness in the towns; the white buildings, the pleasant shaded roads, and the palaces of the local residents, erected with that lavish disregard of the taxpayer at home which alone seems to reconcile the exiled Frenchman to his lot. In the rainy season the river steamer crosses the great lake to Battambang, stopping on the way off the mouth of the Siemrap river; but my journey was made at the end of April, the worst time of the whole year, and the steamer could go no farther than Pnom Penh. There I spent a night at the comfortable hotel, and the following day a small launch took me on as far as Kampong Chnéang. Through the

kindness of the French Resident at Kampong Chnéang. I had no difficulty in hiring a sampan and rowers—for the sum of four shillings a day. With these I hoped to be able to cross the lake, though everywhere I was met with discouraging reports of the shallowness of the water at this time of year.

The sampan was hollowed out of a single trunk. The middle part, measuring about twelve feet long by five broad, was covered with a semicircular roof of attap, and decked with split bamboo, while the ends were decked with boards. Had I been making the journey to Angkor a thousand years ago, it would have been in just such a boat. For ballast the bottom of the boat was lined with three dozen bottles of drinking water, as many of soda-water, and a goodly assortment of *vin ordinaire* and champagne, without which mine host at Pnom Penh seemed to think it would be rash to venture far from his hospitable doors. I was also provided with a crate of chickens, a sack of bread, and firewood in large quantities, while the coolies had their bundles of rice, and for drink depended upon the river. Under the attap roof I lived and slept. My rowers—two Annamese and two Cambodians—occupied the ends of the boat, whilst my Siamese boy and Chinese cook, whom I had brought with me from Bangkok, stowed themselves away as best they could.

Probably few European cooks would cheerfully turn out a dinner of five courses, while squatting between the legs of the rowers, and with a small fire in an earthenware pot by way of kitchen range ; but the Chinaman is wonderful.

On the second day from Kampong Chnéang we

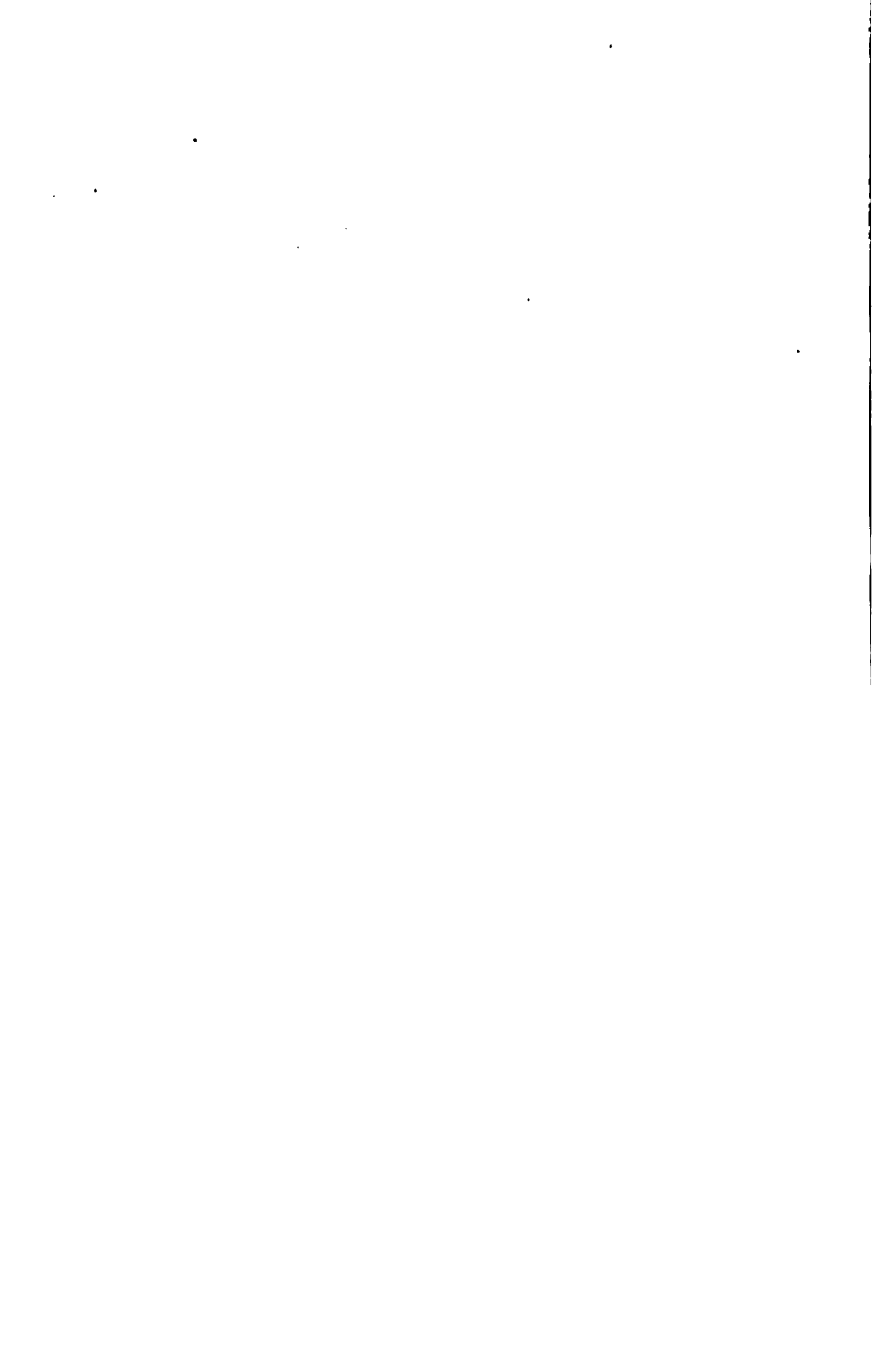


A TOWER, NAKAWN WAT



THE GREAT STAIRCASE, NAKAWN WAT

For the page 286



reached the Talé Sap—a vast sheet of muddy water a hundred miles in length, but at this season only two or three feet deep. When the Mekong rises the lake fills up to a depth of thirty feet, and then, as the river falls, it drains out again through the same channel. On the south the lake and the surrounding alluvial plain are cut off from the coast by a chain of hills, and on the north it is separated from the Korat plateau by the Dong Rek range.

Of human habitation there was no sign upon the banks ; but at rare intervals we came to some miserable fishermen's houses, standing on piles in the lake. They only served to increase the melancholy of the scene, and their smell can be faintly realised by those who know the fishing villages of Norway. When the water rises the lake-dwellers pull up their houses bodily, and with them retire inland.

On every hand there were abundant signs of fish, and the very waters had an oily look. We rowed past fish traps on an enormous scale, and the bamboo frames on which the nets are hung to dry stood gauntly beside the villages. Here and there we saw a fishing boat, the sail bellying feebly in the faint breeze, whilst the Chinese crew yoked themselves in front and dragged it through the mud. The sails of these boats were made of strips of the sago-palm leaf, matted together, and the wind found its way freely through the interstices. My coolies rigged up a mast, to which they attached two red blankets stretched upon bamboos. This gave our sampan a picturesque appearance but it did not help us much. In the large sailing boats the sun-dried fish are taken down the river. The

nets are manipulated from sampans, and when we saw one of these from afar, we altered our course and rowed up to it. Then my coolies would turn over its silvery load, and having selected the best and transferred them to our own boat we parted from the fishermen with mutual expressions of esteem, and no thought of payment. It was, indeed, well worth a few fish to them, to hear the latest gossip from down river. Countless flocks of pelicans were wading in rows upon the oozy slime. The natives credit these birds with great sagacity in their fishing operations, saying that they advance in line, driving before them shoals of fish, until they reach the shore. Then when the fish are flapping helplessly on the mud, they pick them up at leisure.

The sun did not pierce the haze until midday, and at four o'clock it sank once more into the bank of mist—through which it glowed dull red, leaving a track as of burnished copper on the grey water. Up this track we rowed, towards the setting sun, the blades of our oars flashing blood-red at every stroke. We could no longer make out the faint line of forest which fringed the margin of the lake, and we seemed alone in the midst of that great expanse of water. Still it was comforting to know that in case of a squall we could simply step overboard, for the water was scarcely up to our knees. When night fell the coolies drove their oars into the mud, and to them we moored our boat.

On the evening of the fourth day from Kampong Chnéang we came in sight of Pnom Krom, a hill on which a Brahmin sanctuary stands guardian over the entrance to the Siemrap river. We were on the threshold of the ancient kingdom of the Khmers.



AN ANGLE OF A COURT, NAKAWN WAT



That night we reached a fishing village at the mouth of the river, and we were once more in Siamese territory.

The next morning several bullock carts came down to the sandy beach. The bullocks were a fine big breed, and the carts looked very smart, with the pole curving up in a graceful way—evidently intended to represent a Naga. Even in this remote corner there was an echo of the war, for I learnt that the people at this and many another village along the northern shore of the lake were afraid to send their dried fish down the river; for they thought that the Japanese were about to sail up it, and attack the French.

I secured two of the bullock carts, and leaving two coolies to look after the sampan, I set out with the remainder of my party. At first the road led through dense forest, which in the wet season is almost completely submerged. Then we came to open paddy fields, and proceeded over sandy roads in suffocating clouds of dust to the pretty village of Siemrap, whose groves of cocoanut trees border the stream. Here the ingenious irrigation wheels are for ever turned by the current, and lift the water as they turn by means of bamboo buckets, attached to the floats. The village straggles along the banks for two or three miles, but at length we reached a *sala*, where we rested during the heat of the day. Near by was the citadel, surrounded by a wall of laterite. This was built by the Siamese after they had captured the province from Cambodia in 1795. In the market there were current some small copper coins, which appeared to have been cut out of sheet copper by hand. One side was

plain, and on the other was embossed a bird, which looked as if it had been copied from an Egyptian cartouche.

The Siamese Governor at Siemrap was delighted to have someone from Bangkok to talk to, for he was unused to visitors at this time of year. He requested me to sign a book, in which the names of Europeans who come to Siemrap are recorded. This record has been kept for the last ten years, and now contains about six hundred names, nearly all French. Before I left, the Governor lent me one of his officers—Luang Mon Sri Senha. This man proved of the greatest service, for all the natives speak Cambodian, and he translated into Siamese for me. He showed a most intelligent interest in the ruins, and of each he had some interesting story or legend to tell. We became very friendly, and at parting he gave me a budding stag's horn, which he assured me was an infallible charm.

In the afternoon we went on through a forest of fine trees. Often a bough would suddenly bend and spring back, and looking up we caught sight of monkeys, running through the tree-tops. In little over an hour the carts were clattering across the stone causeway, which spans the wide moat of the Nakawn Wat. From below ascended a pleasant tinkling of wooden cow bells; in front the evening sun shone on the old stonework of the entrance, black with lichens and bowered in venerable trees, whilst through the low square doorway we caught a glimpse of sunlit space beyond. Then as we mounted the steps to the doorway, full in front, but still at a great distance, rose the central tower of



A WINDOW, NAKAWN WAT



A DOOR-POST, NAKAWN WAT

the Wat—standing out against the blue sky, a marvel of richness and beauty. From the outer wall the causeway leads straight for a quarter of a mile to the building, and there in the shadow of the Wat itself I made my camp. The monks' houses cluster around the temple, and all day long and far into the night the sound of the old Pali chants rises about the sacred pile.

And now, having brought the reader into the presence of one of the world's masterpieces, I can only hope to convey to him a very imperfect sense of its beauty. But before I make my poor attempt, let it be understood that this temple of Angkor differs even in its conception from our cathedrals. Consider what a cathedral is. It is essentially a house, in which men may gather together; and so its chief glory is its interior, with the lofty spring of arches, and stained glass seen amidst the tracery of windows. That the exterior of a great cathedral may be as worthy of our admiration as its interior is true, but the care bestowed upon the exterior was, in some measure at least, an after-thought. But the most wonderful buildings of the East were intended to bear witness to all who looked upon them, even from afar, and so we have the Taj Mahal, inspired by Love, and the Angkor Wat, inspired by a fervour of piety, stands simply to the Glory of God. The Taj is a vision of foam, caught in the master's mind and recorded in marble, but the builders of Angkor wrought in stern grey stone, in lines "wonderfully strong, yet full of moderation." Egyptian in its massiveness and unsurpassed in the purity of its lines by the finest works of Greece, it stands to-day and is, perhaps, destined to remain,

the noblest monument raised by the hands of man.

The main design is of an admirable simplicity. Three rectangular terraces, surrounded by covered galleries, are superimposed. From the corners of the two last spring pyramidal towers, which, by their symmetrical grouping, lead the eye up to the central tower on the last and highest stage.¹ The impression of height is greatly enhanced by the treatment of the different stages. The lowest is surrounded externally by a corridor, whose massive columns, well spaced, seem to bear up the whole. Above this the horizontal lines of the various galleries, retreating one above the other, are unbroken by any opening, till the final stage is reached. This stage rises high above the rest, and here the vertical motif—interrupted far below—is resumed; for the blank wall is pierced by a continuous row of windows, filled with columns so delicately turned and so closely placed together that they have almost the appearance of lace. But as in a sonata-movement the composer weaves together his two motives, so here the upright lines of the lowest columns are carried on, and faintly suggested, in the flutings into which the roofing of each gallery is broken. Then the first simple notes are repeated and elaborated, in the more complex forms above, and finally the scattered threads are all gathered together, and swell into the grand harmony of the spires overhead.

The terraces, which in their dimensions rival the palace mounds of Assyria, are constructed of blocks

¹ The four outer towers are not strictly symmetrical about the other five, owing to the displacement of the stages, see p. 12. This displacement is greatly exaggerated in the plan.



FROM THE GALLERY OF BAS-RELIEFS, NAKAWN WAT

of laterite ; but the whole of the building itself is of a fine-grained sandstone. From the causeway a short flight of steps leads to the external gallery, which runs completely round the building. This is the celebrated gallery of bas-reliefs, through which we may walk for more than half a mile. Of its internal face there is not a square inch that is not finely chiselled. The bas-reliefs occupy a height of about seven feet, while the remainder of the surface is enriched with decorative designs and the figures of angels and deities. The bas-reliefs are carved upon blocks measuring two feet by eighteen inches, but so perfect is the fitting that it is with the utmost difficulty that the joints can be detected. For the most part the subjects are taken from the Ramayana, and are executed with great spirit. Chariots and spearmen are mingled in inextricable confusion ; here are men fighting with sword and buckler ; there a horse is stumbling to his knees, and beneath these stirring battle scenes we see a stately march of warriors. Nor do we find one stereotyped face, but, on the contrary, the most diverse racial types are portrayed. The drawings of faces from the gallery of bas-reliefs which form the tailpieces to most of the chapters in this book were made from actual rubbings, and the correctness of their proportions may therefore be relied upon. The details were filled in by sketching directly from the originals. In this book the drawings have been reduced to about one-third full size.

To the wheels of the chariots Fergusson draws especial attention, as showing the high state of civilisation attained by the Cambodians. The wheels are so light that they must have been made

of metal, and he contrasts them with the clumsy wheels of the Roman chariots, and the utter barbarism of those represented in Indian sculptures.¹

One detail that is of interest, is the manner in which the archers are shown drawing their arrows, between the first and second fingers, as may also be seen in Assyrian bas-reliefs; and indeed the bas-reliefs at Angkor seem altogether 'Assyrian in character. Like the Assyrian reliefs they were once painted; red, brown and gold being chiefly employed, but the colours have been almost completely worn away, leaving bare the polished stone. Mr. Thomson believes that the scheme of the gallery was completed by a richly-decorated wood ceiling, of which he found some traces. In the eastern face of the gallery there is a large inscription, cut upon a slab, but this bears a date corresponding to 1702 A.D., and it is written in a character which differs little from the Cambodian in use at the present day.

From the gallery of bas-reliefs we ascend to the first court, which is crossed by two colonnades, at right angles.² Each colonnade consists of four rows of square columns. The columns of the two outer ranges are connected by tie-beams with those of the inner ranges. The outer columns are monoliths, but the inner columns appear to be jointed at the point where the tie-beam is inserted. The inner columns support an architrave and sculptured

¹ Fergusson, *History of Architecture*, vol. ii. p. 730.

² It will help the reader to understand the following description if he will refer to the general plan of a Cambodian temple, given on p. 12. At Angkor the arrangement of the stages is reversed, the principal entrance facing west. Part of the first stage, lying to the west of the second stage, is surrounded by a gallery and crossed by the colonnades here described.



CARVINGS FROM THE NAKAWN WAT





frieze, above which the roof rises in a sharply-pointed arch to a height of thirty-five feet from the pavement. The roof consists of massive blocks of stone, increasing in size and overlapping as they mount towards the apex, where they finally abut. The interior surface is planned to the shape of an arch, and where the two colonnades intersect a quasi-Gothic effect is produced. Externally the roof is moulded to a gracious curve. Such is the construction pursued throughout all the galleries, and though not to be compared with a true arch, this marvellous roofing, whose weight must be measured in tons upon every supporting column, has withstood the test of a decade of centuries.

With the exception of sixteen clustered columns on the topmost stage, all the columns in the building are square. Those of the gallery of bas-reliefs and of the colonnades that cross the first court are without bases, and have no perceptible upward diminution. In all the galleries that surround the courts internally, the columns are of the Roman Doric order, but with capitals and bases showing greater elaboration than in classic examples.

At the end of the colonnade that runs east and west we ascend once more, and so reach the second court. From this a splendid staircase, forty feet in height, leads up to the final stage. This is surrounded by a gallery and crossed by four colonnades, which abut on the four sides of the central tower. Beneath the central tower is a small chamber, now walled up. We do not know to whom the temple was originally dedicated, though it was probably to some Brahminical deity, but in modern times

images of the Buddha have been placed around this shrine.

On every hand we see the same profusion of sculpture; every doorpost is a masterpiece, the splay of every window is carved with the most loving care, and deities and sevenfold serpents riot over the towers. Nor do we anywhere find mechanically-executed ornament, no "doggerel ornamentation" as Ruskin terms it, but only designs which, while they observe a cadence, show "perpetual variation and transgression of the formal law."¹

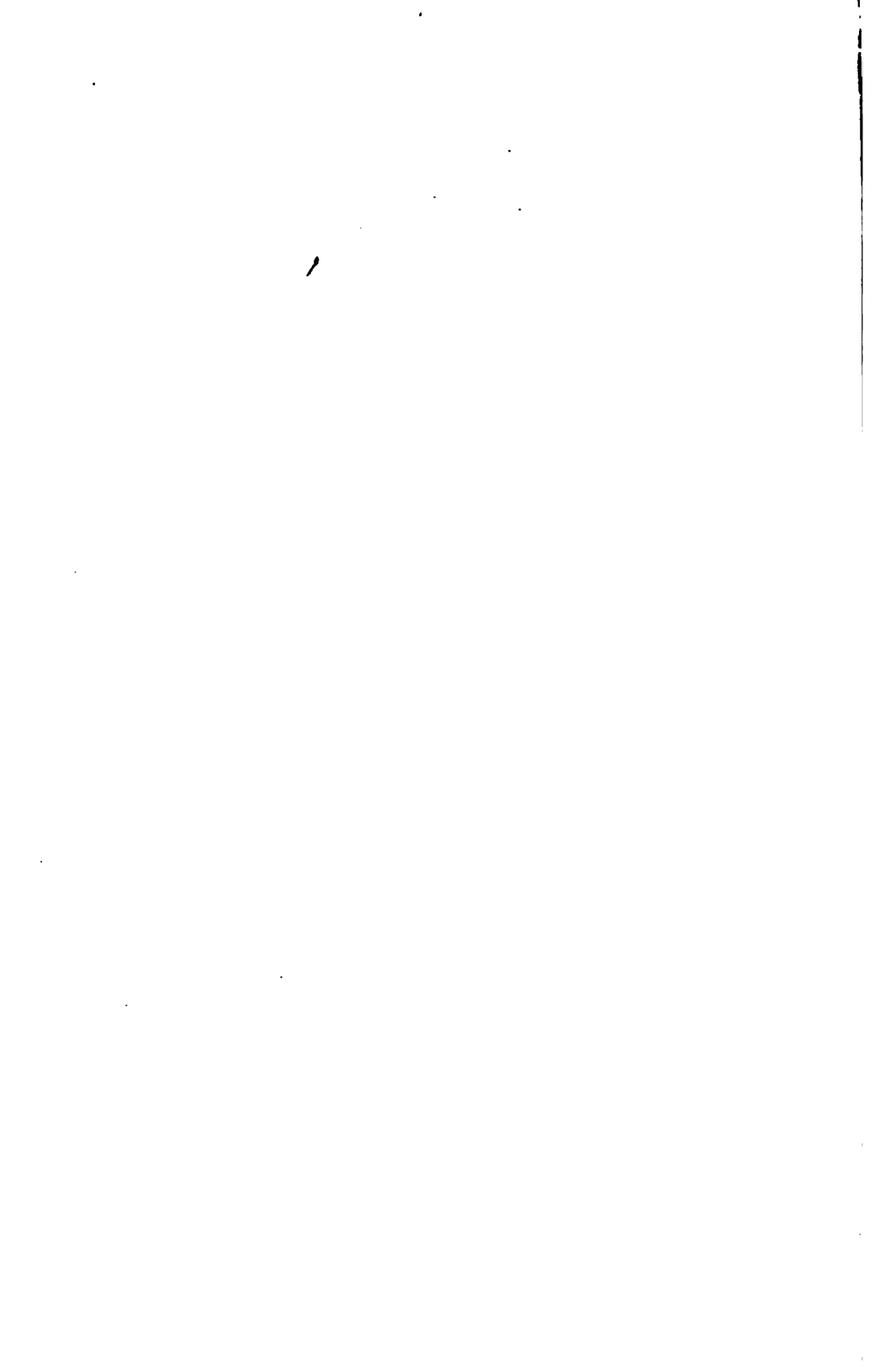
Reflect, too, that every stone in the whole vast edifice has been squared and planed so truly that it rests upon its neighbours without cement of any kind, yet in perfect stability. Nowhere is the beauty of the workmanship more striking than in the windows. Each window contains seven small pillars, whose height is roughly five feet, whilst they are only six inches in diameter. We should expect to find sockets made for these pillars, in order to allow for slight irregularities in length; but not so. They are cut to the exact length required, and there they remain, each bearing its just proportion of the weight. In truth the Lamp of Sacrifice burnt brightly when the old Cambodians built.

In the introduction I have set forth some of the views which are held, as to who the builders were. I will here only add that M. Aymonier—who speaks with the authority of the inscriptions which he has deciphered—tells us that the Nakawn Wat was begun in the year 1090 A.D., and though the actual

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. p. 281.



A COLONNADE, NAKAWN WAT



building must have taken many generations, he believes that it was the personal masterpiece of a Brahmin, Divakara, who during several reigns was the possessor of limitless power.¹ In 1373 A.D. Angkor was overthrown by the Siamese who, it is said, led away ninety thousand Cambodians into captivity.~ The Nakawn Wat was then on the verge of completion, yet it was never actually finished, for the capitals of some of the pillars remain rough and uncarved blocks of stone.

To the Siamese it is clear that 'the great Wat could only have been built by angels. The Cambodian monks, however, while admitting angelic agency, endeavour to give a historical basis to their story, which runs as follows.

In the one thousand and eighteenth year after Buddha's Nirvana (475 A.D.), the king Praket Mala reigned over Angkor Tom, and by his extraordinary merit he was enabled to ascend to the heaven of Indra during his lifetime. He besought Indra to allow him, when he returned to earth, to build a temple whose walls should be of gold. To this Indra would not consent, but he gave permission that an angel should be born again upon earth, and the temple was to be built as this angel should direct. So the angel was born, and under the name of Chao Chet To Ku Ma he built the Nakawn Wat. He was assisted by five hundred artificers, and so great was his merit that he had only to express the desire for a surface to be covered with sculpture and it was so. The five hundred artificers were, besides, no ordinary mortals. In the stones can often be found pairs of round

¹ Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, vol. iii. p. 514.

holes, a few inches deep, and, the monks say, these titans were accustomed to lift the stones, and place them in position, by their thumbs and forefingers inserted in the holes.

When the building was finished, Chao Chet To Ku Ma and his five hundred workmen immediately became angels once more. There was at this time a very holy Brahmin, named Pra Puttha Kosa, who lived at Pnom Penh ; and for him Praketa Mala sent, and gave the Nakawn Wat into his care.

It may be noted that the stone for the building was obtained from quarries, fifteen miles away to the north-west, and they are called the quarries of Mala, or Méléa.

The Nakawn Wat stands without the old Royal city of Angkor Tom. The walls of Angkor enclose a space of five square miles, and from the temple to the nearest gate it is rather more than a mile. For purposes of photography I was anxious to catch the early morning light, so it was an hour before the dawn that I left my camp, and set out along a road tunnelled out of the thick jungle. Great boles cast dancing shadows in the smoky glare of our torches, and giant creepers reached down towards us, out of the blackness overhead. In less than half-an-hour we passed under a tremendous stone portal. Within the wall rank jungle and great trees flourished as without, but at length we came to a clearing, and there, before us, lay the ruins of mighty Angkor, mysterious beneath the tropical moon and peopled with the ghosts of a forgotten race.

Nor was the coming day to break the spell. Slowly the collection of walls and towers took



THE CENTRAL TOWER, NAKAUN WAT

To face page 298



A DOORWAY, BAION

shape, and then, as the first red beams struck athwart the jungle, from every tower looked out to the four quarters of heaven a face, stamped with the wisdom of ages. It was the temple of Baion. Many of the towers are overthrown, and trees grow in the crevices of the great blocks, but enough remains for us to form some idea of what it once was. It is a gloomy shrine, yet the sixty towers regularly grouped about the central pyramid must have produced an indescribably grand effect. Beneath the massive ruins of the upper terraces an external gallery recalls the verandahs of the rock-cut temples of Ajunta. As at Nakawn, this external gallery is lined with bas-reliefs, but their execution here is poor in comparison. The towers with their four-fold faces are really so many gigantic images of Brahma, and this attempt to incorporate the sculpture in the general architectural design is of a distinctly Hindu character. At the Nakawn Wat, notwithstanding the lavish employment of sculpture, there is nothing in its use that would offend the taste of classic Greece.

In the centre of the city is the palace wall, of laterite blocks, beautifully fitted and in good preservation. Save for a small shrine there are no traces of buildings within this enclosure, for the Cambodians reserved their best work for their religious edifices. Near by stands the great pyramid of Bapoum, scarcely inferior to Baion in size, and there, too, is the arena in which combats of wild animals took place. All these I visited, and on my return I climbed to the top of the hill, Pnom Bakheng, which stands beyond the city wall. It is crowned by a sanctuary, and of old looked down

upon all the cities of the plain. Their remains, now buried beneath the forest, are scattered far and wide over the surrounding country.

Of the founding of Angkor Tom tradition has much to say. I will here set it down as it was told to me, only pointing out that the "Leprous King" is a semi-historical character, who lived long after the founder of Angkor with whom he is identified in the legend.

Long before there was any such kingdom as Siam, the King of the Laos reigned at Nakawn Indapat-Buri. He had ten sons, of whom the eldest, Pra T'hong Rat Koma, while still a child, determined to carve out a fortune for himself; so with ten thousand followers he set forth. At length they came to the Talé Sap, and there the prince determined to build for himself a city. In two years it was finished, and became the great city, Angkor Tom. Now there was a beautiful nymph—the daughter of a Naga King—who dwelt underground, but about the time that the building of Angkor Tom was completed she ascended into the upper air and dwelt in the town of Bari. There, when he was fifteen years old, the young King of Angkor met her, and took her back with him as his wife. They had one son, Chao Butom Suriwong, who was the father of that Praket Mala who built the Nakawn Wat.

Of Pra T'hong Rat Koma many stories are told. It is said that, like his grandson, he wished to make the walls of his palace of gold; but the god Indra, who seems to have been determined to save the family from extravagance, would not permit it.

In his later years this King was afflicted with



BAION

To face page 300



leprosy, some say because he had abandoned snake-worship, the old religion of the country. He is always known as the "Leprous King," and his statue, carved in stone, may be seen near the palace.

A learned Brahmin offered to cure him of his malady; but first it was necessary that he should be killed, and thrown into a cauldron of boiling medicine, from which he would emerge alive and clean. The King refused to believe in the Brahmin's power, but the Brahmin took a dog, which he killed and threw into the boiling cauldron, when it immediately jumped out and frisked about. Still the King doubted. Thereupon the Brahmin offered to slay himself, and he gave the King three drugs which were to be thrown successively into the cauldron. The first would give form to the dead body; the second, beauty; the third, life. Then the Brahmin flung himself into the boiling medicine, but the King, forgetful of his instructions, threw in all the three drugs at once, and the Brahmin was changed to a stone statue.

On the last two or three nights that I remained at Angkor there were heavy storms. When the time came for my departure I sent to Siemrap for bullock carts. They arrived late one evening, and the next morning we set out upon the return journey. At Siemrap I laid in a large supply of green cocoanuts, which proved very valuable, as my stock of drinking water ran low. I had filled up all the bottles before starting, but in a few days I found that the water in most of them was bad. A week had changed the roads into a morass, in which the carts sank up to the axles. Sometimes they lurched in an alarming manner, and seemed about to

tip over, but though the body of the cart is narrow the wheel base is wide, and they always righted. At one place, where we forded the river, three otters were busily engaged in catching fish. At length the carts could go no farther and we were forced to transfer the baggage to a canoe, in which we paddled down the river to the sandy beach, where the sampan awaited us.

The following morning we rowed out once more upon the great lake. The rain had dispelled the haze, and under a clear blue sky the rich brown sheet of water was flecked with the white sails of little skiffs, which span merrily along in the stiff breeze. But in the afternoon we were ringed about with storms. Only here and there did the black lowering clouds lift near the horizon, permitting a glimpse of luminous opalescent sky and far-distant hills.

Adverse winds delayed our return, and at the lower end of the lake we found that the water had fallen, leaving a dreary waste of mud through which one narrow lane led to the river beyond. Rows of fishing boats were stuck in the channel, and round these we had to go, the coolies digging out a way with their hands through the mud and painfully towing the boat along. It was long past midnight on the fifth day when we wearily crept into Kampong Chnéang, and there returned once more to civilisation.

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE heading to the introduction is copied from a carved stone lintel at Lopburi, now removed from the temple to which it belonged and placed in the museum at Lopburi. It should be compared with the lintel of the doorway at Baion (illustration facing page 298). The figure in the centre is Indra, riding on his three-headed elephant, Erawan.

The same figure occurs on each of the four sides of the great *pra prang* at Wat Chang, Bangkok. The trunks of Erawan can be seen projecting from the left-hand side of the *pra prang* (illustration facing page 104). In this case they are moulded in plaster upon an iron foundation, and painted.

A Fresco. From the *bawt*, Wat Chang, Bangkok. (Facing page 84.)

The fresco represents the Great Renunciation. The greater portion is taken up with Prince Sri T'hat T'ha's palace, surrounded by a white battlemented wall. From the gate issues a splendid procession, in the midst of which Prince Sri T'hat T'ha is riding in a chariot, preceded and followed by men bearing umbrellas, the insignia of royalty. On the right of the gate is a *sala*, beside which the common people are kneeling and *wai-ing* to the prince. A short distance in front of the head of the procession a beggar sits beside a skeleton. This was one of the sights which caused the Prince to reflect on the sorrows of existence, and led him eventually to embrace a religious life. In the upper part of the picture he is shown riding away from the palace, mounted on his white horse Kant'haka and accompanied by his faithful attendant Channa. His wife, Yasodara, and new-born child, whom he left behind, may be seen in a room of the palace, on the left.

A Pra Prang. Wat Pichaiyat, Bangkok. (Facing page 112.)

This structure is a modification of the ancient fivefold Cambodian sanctuaries, built in the form of a cross (see page 237). The connecting galleries have been entirely omitted, and in the place of the two sanctuaries which should stand at the east and west extremities of the cross are two of the columns on pyramidal bases, to which the name Pra Prang properly belongs. The spires which surmount the central sanctuary and the sanctuaries standing at the north and south extremities of the cross have neither the grace of those at the Nakawn Wat nor the rugged strength which characterises the towers of Lopburi. This particular structure was probably copied from a temple at Ayuthia (probably the temple mentioned by Father Tachard, see page 215), for there the central spire has much the same proportions, and tall lancet-shaped doorways take the place of the low square doorways which are found in the old sanctuaries.

In the great Pra Prang at Sawankalok the ratio of the height to the diameter is about the same as in this spire, but the sides are more nearly parallel.

Bronze Images. (Facing page 96.)

1. Bronze image of Buddha walking. This is a very rare attitude. Height of original— $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

2. Buddha of *samrit* bronze (bronze and silver) seated in the attitude of contemplation, upon a pierced stand of very unusual design. In the bands of decoration over the Buddha's shoulders and about the lower part of his body, are settings for four large jewels, which have been removed. This image came from Supan. Height of original— $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

3. Bronze image probably representing Mahadeva, said to have been dug up at Prapratom. Upon the head is a small seated figure of Buddha. One pair of arms is raised and the right hand holds a chank shell, while the left supports an emblem which may be intended for flames issuing from a globe. The lower pair of hands is empty. The fingers of the right hand are held so as to form the trident. On the back of the left hand is a *Chakka*. Height of original— $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Tailpiece. (Page 114.)

Three bronze figures on stand. Height of central figure—4 inches. This probably represents Siva between Mahesvari and Lakshmi, though in Siamese mythology these are the consorts of Vishnu. In India Mahesvari is regarded as one of the eight *saktis* or goddesses representing the female energy of Siva. Gerini, *The Tonsure Ceremony as performed in Siam*, p. 25.

Spears, Swords and Fiddles. (Facing page 156.)

1. Siamese Spear. Very fine bamboo shaft and Niello-ware mount.

2. Lao Spear. Shaft entirely cased in silver.

3. Lao Sword and Sheath. Haft and sheath cased in silver with bands of plaited silver wire.

4. Lao Sword. Ivory haft with silver mounts, the lower ornamented with Taypanoms (praying figures), and the upper in the form of a lotus bud.

5. Siamese Sword. Carved ivory haft representing Hanuman (the monkey general) holding a snake which is twined around him.

6. Siamese Knife. Handle of ivory deeply carved in a floral design. Blade damascened with silver.

7. Siamese Knife. Handle of black wood carved in the form of a snake's head with emerald eyes, and a ruby, a garnet and a sapphire set on the back of the head. The stones are small and badly cut. Blade damascened with silver.

8. Malay Kriss and carved wood Sheath. Watered blade. Handle of black wood with elaborately carved head of "King-fisher" pattern, set with two emeralds for eyes. The beak is missing. It was made in a separate piece, probably of copper.

9. Siamese Viol. Ivory neck and foot, the neck decorated with Niello-ware. The cut-glass jewel (see p. 163) is missing, but the position which it occupied can be seen at the top right-hand corner of the membrane.

10. Siamese Fiddle. Of ivory. The belly of the instrument is covered with snake-skin.

11. Siamese Fiddle. Of black wood and ivory. The belly is formed of a cocoanut shell and on the back is carved a winged dragon.

Illustrations to Chapter XV.

The carvings represented in the illustration facing page 294 are in very low relief.

On the left, one-fourth full size, is the head of a taypanom, or figure with hands joined in prayer (see tailpiece, page 164). It is carved on each of the four sides of those columns which have no bases, and it can be distinguished in the illustration facing page 296.

Over the taypanom comes a canopy of leafy ornament, amidst which is a dancing figure, shown one-fourth full size in the illustration facing page 294. This figure may represent Siva, of whom the dancing attitude is characteristic (compare with the bronze image of Mahadeva, shown in the illustration facing page 96).

The position of the legs and the whole pose of the figure are very characteristic of modern Siamese drawings.

The leafy canopy extends to a height of about five feet on each of the four sides of the column, and tendrils run up the edges of the column to the capital. A small portion of the canopy is reproduced, two-thirds full size, upon the cover of this book.

Facing page 290 is an illustration of a window. It is a good photograph, full of detail, yet in the splay of the window—invisible in the illustration, or only to be faintly seen by the aid of a magnifying-glass—the fighting birds shown in the illustration facing page 294 occur eighteen times on each side. The splay of every window throughout the temple is similarly treated, and this design is, therefore, repeated many thousands of times. The design is here given half full size.

Also facing page 290 is an illustration of a door-post, on which are two female figures in *alto rilievo*, surmounted by a canopy composed of returning spiral C curves. This is a typical Late Celtic design, but here the outline is almost lost amidst the wealth of ornamentation.

Look first at the general view of the Nakawn Wat, facing page 284, and note the perfect sense of proportion shown in every part of the building. Note, too, with what mastery the transition is

effected between the mass of deep shadow in the lowest stage and the light mass of the upper stage with its crowning spires.

Then turn to the illustrations of windows and columns, and lastly study the details from those windows and columns. So, perhaps, may the reader begin to understand something of the nature of this temple, and in studying these illustrations his time will be better spent than over tedious pages of description.



INDEX

ADAM'S Peak, 245
Agni, God of Fire, 77
Ajunta, rock-cut temples of, 299
Alabaster, Mr. H., 61, 98, 105, 248
Amaravati stūpa, 91, 107
Ancestor worship, 110
Anghin, 206, 208
Angkor Tom, 11-17, 20, 22, 28, 201, 283, 286, 291, 297-301
Anglo-French agreement, 55, 74
Anglo-Japanese treaty, 75
Annals of the North, 20, 273
Annam, Annamese, 8, 9, 278, 285, 286
Army, 71-73
Arvana, the God, 155
Assyrian Bas-reliefs, 294
Avatars, incarnations, 79, 104
Aymonier, M., 10, 13, 273, 296
Ayuthia, 17, 23-25, 27, 61, 155, 166, 167, 212-219, 222-234, 241-243, 248, 253, 280, 304
BABYLONIANS, 9, 11
Baion, 299, 303
Bai sema, stones marking sacred precincts, 92
Bangkok, 4, 25-28, 31-50, 56, 58-60, 62, 65, 68, 75, 91, 104, 115, 117, 127, 144, 147, 165, 166, 179, 183, 194, 197, 204, 208, 212, 224, 234, 245, 256, 262, 271, 283, 284, 286, 303
Bangkok Debating Society, 86
Bangkok Museum, 101, 102, 104, 223
Bangkok Times, 64, 209
Bang-pa-in, 67
Bangpakong river, 4, 175, 190, 200, 221, 265, 277
Bangplaso, 205-207
Banphaji, 233
Ban Rong Lao, 190, 192, 193, 195-197
Bapoum, 299
Bati, 10
Battambang, 28, 74, 285

Bawt, temple building, 92, 94, 106, 108
Betel vines, 42, 45
Bidder, Mr. M. M., 201
Bijit, H.R.H. Prince, 119
Boat building, 39
Bodhisat, a being who is passing through transmigrations on the way to become a Buddha, 105, 124
Bowring, Sir John, 52
Brahm, 78
Brahma, 78, 96, 105, 106, 113, 236, 299
Brahmins, Brahminism, 9, 14, 19, 21, 59, 77, 78, 96, 103-105, 113, 128, 129, 143, 243, 274, 295, 297, 301
Bronze Age, 6
Bronze casting, 151, 152
Buddha, images of the, 90, 94-100, 121, 125, 139, 150-153, 168, 214, 217-219, 238, 246, 278, 296, 304
"Buddha in the Jungle", 100, 279, 280
Buddha, teaching of the, 79-81, 83, 84
Buffaloes, 180, 181, 196, 263-265
Burmah, Burmese, 1, 3, 6, 22, 24, 27, 56, 59, 66, 72, 111, 129, 140, 160, 161, 164, 183, 201
CALENDAR, 22
Cambodia, Cambodian, 1, 6, 7, 9-23, 28, 98, 112, 113, 122, 140, 143, 144, 146, 157, 158, 200, 236, 237, 280, 285, 286, 289, 290, 293, 296, 297, 299, 303
Canals, 37, 166, 174, 175
Cashmere, 14, 15
Caucasic peoples, 7-9, 15, 16, 19
Celtic crosses, Late, 97
Celtic ornament, Late, 306
Ceylon, 14, 59, 98, 104, 245
Chainat, 256
Chakka, wheel emblem, 96, 97, 271
Chaldæa, 95, 102
Champa, 8, 9

Channa, Sri T'hat T'ha's attendant, 303
 Chantabun, 160, 283
 Chao P'hya Chakkri, King of Siam, 28
 Charms, 6, 60, 138-143, 228, 290
 Chieng-Mai, 3, 5, 20, 67, 68, 148, 149, 261
 Chila, a monk's pupil, 116, 118
 China, Chinese, 1, 9, 19-21, 24, 26, 27, 32-34, 36-39, 44, 47, 49, 50, 58, 59, 64, 66, 69, 71, 75, 99, 111, 146, 148-150, 154, 158, 160-162, 164, 165, 190, 195, 197, 201, 205, 218, 259, 268, 283, 286, 287
 Cholera, 49, 137
 Chulalongkorn, King, 54, 57
 Climate, 48
 Cock-fighting, 203
 Coinage, 67, 153, 154, 281
 Conscription, 71
 Contemplation, attitude of, 101
 Corea, 24
 Cotton, 2, 273
 Council of Ministers, 56
 Cremations, 133-135, 137
 Crown Prince, the, 57

 DACOITS, 66, 72, 258, 262-265, 268
 Damrong, H.R.H. Prince, 24, 55, 280, 281
 Days of the week, 102
 Delhi, 15
 Disciples of the Buddha, 91, 100
 Divakara, 297
 Dong Rek hills, 6, 287
 Dravidian, 14, 17
 Dress, 3, 36, 37, 44, 160, 161
 Dutch, 25
 Dvaravadi, 19

 EAR-RINGS, 98
 Eclipses, 103, 243
 Education, 60
 Eekay, theatrical performance, 162
 Egypt, Egyptians, 9, 10, 110, 113
 Elephants, 5, 220-232, 259, 260, 274, 275
 Erawan, Indra's elephant, 303
 Executions, 63, 265-269

 FERGUSON, PROF. J., 14, 106, 107, 293
 Festivals, 123-129

Fisheries, 64, 185-190, 205, 287-289
 Footprint of Buddha, 97, 98, 245-249, 261
 France, French, 25-29, 47, 53-55, 114, 139, 241-243, 278, 283-286, 289, 290
 Fruit gardens, 44-46, 58, 64, 184, 191, 195, 196

 GAMBLING, 64-66, 190, 203, 259
 Garuda. See P'hya Krut
 Gautama or Pra Samana Kodom, 57, 81, 86, 97, 100, 102, 105, 110
 Gendarmerie, 53, 72, 73, 208, 217, 263
 Gerini, Col. G. E., 15, 19, 22, 23, 154
 Germany, Germans, 47, 53, 212
 Gittins, Mr. H., 6
 Great Lake. See Talé Sap
 Greece, 6, 151, 299
 Goetz, Mr. A., 258
 Golden Mount or Pu Kao T'hong, 35, 127
 Gopuras, entrance halls, 13, 14
 Government departments, 52, 53
 Governors, 56, 70, 173, 216, 217, 290

 HANASA, the vehicle of Brahma, 113
 Hanuman, the monkey general, 104, 305
 High Commissioners, 56, 173
 Himap'han or Himalayan fairyland, 106, 159
 Hindus, 9, 15, 33, 103, 238

 INDAPAT-BURI, 15, 300
 India, Indians, 8, 9, 14, 16-19, 23, 103, 146
 Indra or Pra In, 77, 84, 97, 103, 134, 274, 297, 300, 303
 Irrawadi, river, 17
 Irwin, Mr. A. J., 195, 235, 236

 JACQUEMYS, M. ROBIN, 55
 Japan, Japanese, 24-26, 59, 74, 112, 140
 Java, Javanese, 6, 10, 23, 161
 Jesuits, 51, 241, 243

 KAKHYENS, 19
 Kambu, 10
 Kampeng Pet, 23
 Kampong Chnéang, 285, 286, 288, 302
 Kampong Som, 283, 284
 Kanburi, 273, 281

Kant'haka, Sri T'hat T'ha's horse, 303
 Karens, 7
 Katamat Pet attitude, 153
 Kaw Pra Sai, festival of, 125
 Kaw Si Chang, 47
 Kelantan, 161
 Ken, musical instrument, 164
 Kharma, doctrine of, 81-84
 Khas, 7
 Khmers, also see Cambodians, 10,
 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 288
 Kien Svay, 11
 Kiu-lung mountains, 19
 Kinarés, mythical animals, 106
 Kite flying, 203, 204
 Klongs. See Canals
 Klong Rong Sit, 213
 Klong Song Pi Nong, 278, 280
 Kochasi, a mythical animal, 159
 Korat, 5, 6, 13, 15, 17, 67, 233, 287
 Krat, 283
 Krishna, 79
 Kroot T'hai, festival of, 124
 Kuis, 7, 9
 Kulen hills, 15

LAKHON, theatrical performance,
 131, 161-163
 Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu, 305
 Lampun, 20
 Land Tenure and Registration, 69,
 172, 173, 183, 184
 Language, 21
 Lao, 1-3, 7, 15, 21, 138, 155, 157,
 164, 259, 275, 276, 300
 Lawas, 7
 Laws and Law Courts, 61-64
 Lent, Buddhist, 118, 121
 Leprous King, 300, 301
 Linga and Lingam, phallic em-
 blems, 113, 114, 271
 Lopburi, 4, 17, 18, 147, 158, 233-239,
 243, 256, 257, 281, 303, 304
 Louis XIV. of France, 25, 51, 241
 Lovéa Em, 11
 Lowe, Mr. N. E., 247
 Loy Krathong, 129
 Luang Mon Sri Senha, 290
 Luang Prabang, 6, 7, 28
 Lustral water, 92, 139

MAHABHARATA, the Hindu epic, 15
 Mahadeva, the great God, 113, 304,
 306

Mahesvari, consort of Vishnu, 305
 Mahometans, 26, 33
 Make, 216
 Mala or Meléa, King of Angkor,
 297, 298, 300
 Malacca, Strait of, 21, 25
 Malay Peninsula, Malays, 1, 6-8,
 17, 21, 26, 27, 33, 34, 68, 74, 155,
 158, 160, 161
 Mans, 7
 Manu, 10, 61
 Mara. See Phya Man
 Maradop, a building used for crema-
 tions, 134, 248
 Marriage, 60, 61, 276
 Massie, M., 6
 Masterman, Mr. S. W., 245, 252
 Meklong, river, 4, 273, 277
 Mekong, river, 1, 8, 9, 13, 29, 285, 287
 Menam Chao Phya or Menam,
 river, 3, 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23-
 25, 175, 233, 260, 277
 Menam Pichai, river, 260, 262
 Menam Ping, river, 3, 5, 260
 Menam Po, river, 3, 5, 260
 Menam Yom, river, 260, 262
 Menes, 10
 Mexico, snake worship in, 106
 Meru, Mount, 84, 85, 96, 103, 137
 Michell, Mr. J., 280
 Minos of Crete, 10
 Missionaries, 59, 87
 Monasteries, Monks, 36, 60, 80, 90-
 94, 109, 116-135, 138, 139, 142,
 143, 168, 169, 291
 Mongkut, King, 20, 54, 69, 70, 86, 118
 Mongolians, 8, 9, 16, 19
 Mons. See Peguans
 Moulmein, 3
 Muang Tum, 278
 Music, 163, 164
 My'tho, 285

NAGA, a hooded serpent, 97, 106-
 108, 289
 Nakawn Chaisi, 270
 Nakawn Nayok, river, 220, 259
 Nakawn Wat, 11-14, 22, 96, 98, 108,
 157, 290-298, 300, 304, 306
 Nakawn Sri Tamarat, 158
 Nam Sak, river, 233
 Narai, King, 4, 25, 27, 57, 86, 214,
 233, 235, 241-243
 Navy, 73

Negritic peoples, 7
 New Amsterdam, 25
 Niello ware, 158, 159, 163
 Nile, river, 9
 Nirvanah, Nehban, 82-85, 90, 105
 Norasing, a divinity, 149
 Norway, snake symbol in, 108, 109

OPIUM, 64-66, 190
 Opra Pitrachard, 26, 27, 243

PACHIN, 221, 265
 Paknam Po, 3, 67, 72, 165, 256-262
 Pali, a mythical animal, 137
 Pallegoix, M., 14
 Paniet, elephant stockade, 220, 228
 Panung. See Dress
 Paper currency, 66
 Pavie, M., 10
 Pechaburi, 67, 68, 237, 261
 Pees, 136-138, 143, 231, 253, 257, 259, 274
 Pegu, Peguans or Mons, 17, 19, 24, 61
 Penang, 68
 Pepys' Diary, 231
 Persia, Persian, 9, 159, 163, 240
 Phallic worship, 112, 113
 Phaulcon, Constantine, 25, 51, 235, 237, 239-244
 Phya Krut or Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, 104, 107
 Phya Man or Mara, the evil one, 92, 93, 102
 Phya Tak Sin, King of Siam, 27, 28
 Pimai, 17
 Pineapple cultivation, 195, 196
 Pitsunalok, 280
 Pluto, 102
 Pnom Bakheng, 299
 Pnom Krom, 288
 Pnom Penh, 11, 285, 286, 298
 Police, 49
 Ponies, 196, 201-203
 Population, 47, 59, 75
 Portugal, Portuguese, 22, 24, 243
 Pra Atit, angel of the Sun, 102
 Prabat or Pra Puttha Bat, 122, 158, 233, 245, 247, 249, 253, 255, 261
 Pra Chao U Thong, King of Siam, 23, 24
 Pra Chedi, a votive spire, 18, 93, 94, 110-113, 217, 219, 238, 248, 271, 273

Pra Dhamayut, sect of monks, 118
 Pra Isuen. See Siva
 Pra Ket or Ketu, a deity, 103
 Pra Mahanikai, sect of monks, 118
 Pra Mokhalan, a disciple, 100
 Pra Narai. See Vishnu
 Pra Prang, a votive spire, 11, 17, 93, 94, 104, 112, 271, 272, 303, 304
 Prapratawn, 271-273, 281
 Prapratom, 18, 49, 111, 148, 270-274
 Pra Puttha Chao. See Buddha
 Pra Puttha Yot Fa, King of Siam, 61
 Pra Rahoo, a demon, 103
 Pra Ruang, King of Siam, 22, 148
 Pra Samana Kodom. See Gautama
 Pra Sangkachai, a disciple, 101
 Pra Sariput, a disciple, 100
 Praten, 274
 Pra Torani, angel of the Earth, 93
 Pra Yama, judge of the underworld, 102
 Prek Thnot, 10
 Prisons, 63, 216, 266
 Proto Malays, 8, 9
 Pu Kao Thong. See Golden Mount
 Pulo Condor, 284

QUEEN OF SIAM, 57

RACHASI, a mythical animal, 159
 Raheng, 3, 261
 Railways, 53, 67, 68, 212, 213, 233, 246, 250, 256
 Rama or Pra Rama, 104, 155
 Ramakien or Ramayana, the Hindoo epic, 103, 293
 Ranat, musical instrument, 163
 Ravana, demon King of Lanka, 104
 Revenue, 64
 Reussi or Yogi, hermit, 101, 107, 209, 210
 Rice cultivation, 2, 175-182, 209
 Rice export and mills, 46, 47
 Romans, 9
 Roman Doric columns, 295
 Rongs, 7
 Rua chang, ferry boat, 37
 Rudra, the God, 113
 Ruskin, 296
 Russo-Japanese war, 74, 284, 289
 SAIGON, 48, 68, 283-285
 Saka era, 22
 Sakai, 7

- Saktis, consorts of divinities, representing female energy, 305
 Sakya, race from which the Buddha sprang, 57
 Salas, rest-houses, 91, 168, 169
 Salween, river, 3
 Sanchi Tope, 107, 112
 Sanctuaries, 10-13, 236, 237, 288, 304
 Sankhya philosophy, 78
 Sarong. See Dress
 Sawankalok, 20, 111, 112, 148, 149, 262, 304
 Sayama, 21
 Second King, 57
 Semangs, 7
 Shans, 1, 6, 19, 21, 22, 72, 153, 160
 Singapore, 21, 31, 68, 285
 Si'racha, 208
 Sirot, the glory on the Buddha's head, 95, 100
 Siva or Pra Isuen, 78, 79, 104, 113, 114, 236, 280, 305, 306
 Slavery, 69-71
 Smyth, Mr. H. Warington, 171
 Snakes, 193-195
 Snake worship, 9, 106-109, 113, 301
 Songkran, festival of, 125, 279
 Spivey, Mr. H. E., 256
 Sri T'hat T'ha, who became the Buddha, 79, 96, 116, 303
 Sri Vijaya, 18
 Stone Age, 6, 7
 Stonehenge, 112
 Stūpas, relic mounds, 107, 110, 111
 Sukot'hai, 17, 20, 22, 23, 147, 154
 Sumatra, 6, 21
 Supan, 17, 18, 24, 279-281
 Surya, the Sun God, 77
 Survey Department, 53, 183, 184
 Suvarnabhumi, 18, 24, 281
 Swinging festival, 128, 129

 TACHARD, FATHER, 50, 61, 145, 229, 230, 234, 239-241, 243, 304
 Tachin river, 18, 24, 274, 277-279, 281
 Tai, T'hai, 20
 Tai-Shans, 19, 20, 21, 55
 Taj Mahal, 291
 Talé Sap or Great Lake, 8, 14, 15, 28, 287, 302
 Taoism, 106
 Tarua, 233, 245, 246, 253
 Tatacut, 200, 201, 204, 205

 Tattooing, 140, 141
 Taypanom, praying figure, 149, 306
 Taywadah or Deva, lower divinity, 84, 136
 Taxes, 46, 64, 66, 70, 71, 182, 183, 185
 Taxila, 14
 Tea, 2, 3
 Teak, 3, 46, 166, 261, 262
 Tibet, 59, 97
 Tides, 4, 166
 Thomson, Mr., 16, 294
 T'hot Khatin, 126, 204
 Tobacco, 2, 41, 209, 273
 Tong-King, 1, 7, 8
 Top-knot cutting ceremony, 42, 103, 129-133, 141, 143, 144
 Torapee, a mythical animal, 137
 Torris, Shinto gates, 112
 Trade, 46
 Treaties, 28
 Tree worship, 109, 110
 Trident symbol, 114
 Tushita heaven, 105

 UNALOM scrolls, 141
 Utaradit, 5, 262
 U T'hong, 24, 280, 281

 VEDANTIST philosophy, 78
 Vedas, Vedic, 77, 113
 Village government, 55, 56
 Vishnu or Pra Narai, 78, 79, 98, 104, 113, 236, 305

 WAN PRA, Buddhist holy day, 69
 Wat. See Monasteries
 Wat Chang, 107, 150, 303
 Wat Chern, 218
 Wat Na Pra Tat, 237
 Wat Pichaiyat, 303
 Wat Prakeo, the Royal temple, 108, 150, 151
 Wat Pra Tat, 248
 Wat Somorakôt, 217
 Water of Allegiance, 128
 Water-pouring ceremony, 92, 124
 Wien Tieng, ceremony of, 144
 Wihans, image-houses, 92, 94
 Wood carving, 147
 Women, position of 61, 73, 80

 YANGTSE KIANG, RIVER, 19
 Yasodara, Sri T'hat T'ha's wife, 303
 Yasovarman, King of Angkor, 14
 Yoshiwara, 116

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